Pinnacle Papers
VOLUME 2

بَاطِنُ الإِثْمِ
الخَطَرُ الأَكْبَرُ فِي حَيَاةِ المُسْلِمِينَ

Inward Sin

The Greatest Danger in the Lives of Muslims

By
Imam Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

Translated by
Mahdi Lock

NAWA BOOKS

Pinnacle Papers
VOLUME 2

بَاطِنُ الإِثْمِ

الخَطَرُ الأَكْبَرُ فِي حَيَاةِ المُسْلِمِين

Inward Sin

The Greatest Danger in the Lives of Muslims

By
Imam Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

Translated by
Mahdi Lock

NAWA BOOKS

We at Nawabooks would like to express our appreciation to everybody who contributed in making this book a reality. We pray that Allah ﷻ bestow His blessings upon it by guiding readers of this book closer towards Allah ﷻ and His beloved Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

Pinnacle Papers: A Collection of Masterpieces by Imam Muhammad Sa'id Ramadān al-Būtī
بَاطِنُ الإِثْمِ - الخَطَرُ الأَكْبَرُ فِيْ حَيَاةِ المُسْلِمِيْنَ
INWARD SIN - The Greatest Danger in the Lives of Muslims

© Nawabooks, 2021

Originally Published by:	Dar Al Fikr 2020"
Published by:	Nawabooks
Published in:	Dec 2021
Website:	www.nawabooks.com
Email:	nawabooks@gmail.com
Author:	Imam Muhammad Sa'id Ramadān al-Būtī
Translated by:	Mahdi Lock

All rights reserved. Aside from fair use, meaning a few pages or less for non-profit educational purposes, review, or scholarly citation, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN:	978-981-18-2877-5
Cover by:	Muhammadan Press

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Author

I

Translator's Introduction and Acknowledgements

III

About the Translator

V

Foreword by Dr Muhammad Tawfiq Muhammad Sa'id Ramadān al-Būtī

VII

Foreword by Dr Muhammad Tawfiq Ramadān al-Būtī (translated)

IX

Introduction to the Second Edition

1

Introduction to the First Edition

7

The Inward and the Outward or Religion and Judgement

13

The Greatest Danger!

21

The Source of This Danger

27

The Consequences of this Danger

29

This is the Remedy
39
The Road to Using this Remedy
47
Names and Titles Do Not Concern Us
65
Moral Taṣawwuf and Emotional Taṣawwuf
69
Our Problems are Moral, Not Intellectual
73
Conclusion
79
Let Us Make a Pledge before Parting Ways
83

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Imam Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍan Al-Būṭī is one of the foremost Muslim theologians and legal scholars of this age. Born in 1929 in the village of Ayn Dewar in northern Syria, the imam moved to Damascus at the age of four with his father, the great scholar Mullā Ramaḍān al-Būṭī ﷺ, where he received his primary and secondary education. In 1953, he joined the Faculty of Sharīʿah at the University of al-Azhar in Cairo, Egypt, graduating with a first class in 1955. The following year he obtained a Diploma in Education from the Faculty of Arabic Language at the same University.

In 1958, the Imam was appointed as a teacher at the secondary school in Homs and in 1961, he was appointed as a lecturer in the Faculty of Sharīʿah at the University of Damascus. In 1965, at the University of al-Azhar once again, he obtained his doctorate with high distinction and a recommendation for a teaching post. That same year, he was appointed as a teacher in the Faculty of Sharīʿah at the University of Damascus, then an assistant professor and finally a full professor. He became the vice dean of that college in 1975 and then the dean in 1977. A few years later, he was appointed head of the department of Theology and Comparative Religion.

In addition to his lecturing, Imam al-Būṭī wrote around sixty books covering various Islamic sciences and subjects, the most prominent ones being Fiqh al-Sīrah (The Jurisprudence of the Prophetic Biography), *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyyāt al-Kawniyyah* (The Greatest Universal Sureties) and his four-volume commentary on the spiritual aphorisms of Imam Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh al-Askandarī. He was also very active in teaching common believers in local masjids, especially Masjid al-Īmān in Damascus, and on television, recordings of which can be found online and especially on the site www.naseemalsham.com. He also served as the imam at the Umayyad Grand Masjid in Damascus for Friday prayers, a post he held for decades.

On March 21, 2013, Imam al-Būtī, along with approximately fifty students, was murdered by terrorists while teaching Qurʾānic commentary in Masjid al-Īmān. Despite the immense trials and tribulations that Syria was and is still enduring, Imam al-Būṭī ﷺ was never dissuaded from his dedicated service to knowledge. After a funeral prayer that was attended by thousands of people, the Imam was buried next to Imam Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī ﷺ in Bāb al-Saghīr graveyard in Damascus. May the Lord ﷻ bless and have mercy on him and all of us.

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all creation, who forgives sins and with Him alone is every success. There is no power or strength except in Him. As Allah has honoured this miserable slave with the completion of such a task, all I ask is that He increase the blessings He has already bestowed upon me and to make me a better believer, cleanse my heart and grant me further strength to serve Him and the Ummah of His Beloved ﷺ.

As for the creation, I begin by thanking Ustādh Muḥammad Jalaluddeen of Nawa Books for taking on the beautiful project of translating and publishing the Pinnacle Papers into English, this book being the second volume in the series. May Allah reward him immensely in this life and the next, protect him from harm, and grant him a long, healthy life full of worship and righteousness, āmīn!

I must also thank Dr Maḥmūd Ramaḍān for his constant support and for always being on hand to answer questions. I should also thank him, again, for introducing me to the book Man and Allah's Justice on Earth, which is the first volume in this series and got this larger project off the ground. May Allah reward him, his father, his grandfather, and his entire family in abundance in this life and the next, āmīn!

For proofreading, I ask Allah to reward Sister Lubābah al-Qāsim in both abodes for taking time out of her busy schedule to go over the text and check for typos and other mistakes. Ustādh Jalaluddeen

has also read over the text but I must stress, however, that any errors or shortcomings that still remain are solely my responsibility. We praise Allah ﷻ for any benefit that comes out of this work. Only the mistakes are mine.

Lastly, I thank my wife for her patience, serenity, and encouragement throughout the translation process. May Allah reward her and her parents immensely, āmīn!

As for the content, this book is transformative. When Allah puts us through stressful and trying situations, we often forget that Allah is doing this in order for us to call us back to Him; He loves us. He misses us. He wants us to call out to Him. He wants to hear your voice. This abode is one of trial. To overcome whatever trial comes our way, we need to change what is within ourselves. We need to strive to remove our sins, not just outwardly but also inwardly, and then we must strive to build our relationship with Him.

My advice to myself and to the reader is to relish this book, to enjoy it, to contemplate it, and then to stick to the pledge that Imam al-Būṭī ﷺ presents at the end; and with Allah alone is every success. If Allah so wills, your relationship with Him will not just grow, but bloom.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

Mahdi Lock is a professional freelance translator of classical Arabic Islamic texts into English. He has a BA in Arabic and History from the University of Leeds, an MA in Arabic Linguistics from King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, and a Diploma in Translation from the Chartered Institute of Linguists in London, of which he is also a Member (MCIL). He has been studying theology, law and other Islamic sciences for several years with teachers in England, North Africa and the Middle East. To date, his translated works include Kitāb al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām by Imam Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, Kitāb al-Waqf from al-Mughnī al-Muḥtāj by al-Khaṭīb al-Shirbīnī, the introduction to al-Majmū' by Imam Yaḥyā al-Nawawī and Sharḥ al-Ṣudūr by Imam Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī.

FOREWORD - ARABIC

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الحمد لله رب العالمين، والصلاة والسلام على سيدنا محمد خاتم النبيين وعلى آله وصحبه الغر الميامين ومن تبعهم بإحسان إلى يوم الدين.

وبعد:

فقد صدر هذا الكتاب الصغير في حجمه الكبير في موضوعه وأهميته وأصدائه، في أوائل سبعينات القرن الماضي؛ حيث كان النشاط الدعوي المسجدي وغير المسجدي في أوجه، ليس ثمة ما يعيقه. وأذكر أن بعض منتسبي النشاط الدعوي استقبل الكتاب بقبول، وجعله ضمن مناهج أتباعه. بينما كان آخرون في غاية السخط والتذمر منه بل اتجهوا إلى منتسبي جماعتهم بالتحذير منه!! مع أن الكتاب لم يتعرض لأي جماعة أو أي رمز من رموز الجماعات. إنما عالج مشكلة (باطن الإثم) والتي أمر البيان الإلهي بالتنزه منها وتجنبها.

وغني عن البيان أن ظاهر الإثم إنما هو المعاصي التي ترتكب بالجوارح كاللسان والعين والإذن واليد والرجل .... كالغيبة والنميمة والكذب والنظر إلى المحرمات ...الخ أما باطن الإثم فهي ما كان الربانيون يحذرون منه لأنه الأخطر في آثاره ... مما لا يطلع عليه الناس ولكن لا يخفى على رب الناس. كالرياء والحسد والكبر والحقد. مما تتجلى آثاره في العلاقة بين الناس والجماعات. وخطورته في العمل الدعوي شديدة. وقد يصل به إلى آثار مدمرة. ولعلنا - وبعد نحو نصف قرن من الزمن - ندرك خطورة تلك الآثار التي صارت ماثلة أمام الأعين.

إن تجرد العمل الدعوي عن الأغراض الشخصية والفئوية أمر في غاية الأهمية، ولكن ذلك لن يتحقق إلا عندما يكون العمل خالصاً لوجه الله، بعيداً عن حظوظ النفس وأغراضها.

رحم الله سيدي الوالد الشهيد كم كان غيوراً على الدعوة من أن تصبح سلماً للأغراض الشخصية أو ميداناً للخصومات والنزاعات ...

رحمه الله داعية ورحمه الله مرشداً ورحمه الله غنياً عن دنيانا ومطامعها بما كان يرجو من رضى الله وقبوله.

وهنا لا بد من التنويه بجهد أخي المترجم الأستاذ مهدي لوك، الذي بذل جهداً مخلصاً في ترجمة هذا الكتاب وكتب أخرى سبقته، بعد أن اختار دار [Nawa Books] بإدارة الأخ جلال الدين لطباعته ونشره بعد أن نالا الموافقة على ذلك من دار النشر بدمشق (دار الفكر) ومن ورثة المؤلف رحمه الله.

والحمد لله رب العالمين.

محمد توفيق رمضان البوطي

FOREWORD

In the Name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Most Merciful

All praise is due to Allah, and blessing and peace be upon our master Muḥammad, all his blessed and noble Family and Companions, and those who follow them in excellence until the Day of Repayment.

To proceed:

This book, which is small in size yet great in terms of its subject matter, importance, and reverberations, was published in the early seventies of the last century, when da'wah activity in and outside of masjids was at its peak. There was nothing to hinder it. I remember that some of those who were affiliated with the da'wah activity welcomed the book, and made it recommended reading material for their followers, while others were extremely angry and complained about it, and even went as far as to warn their congregants against it. This is despite the fact that the book does not focus on any particular congregation, nor does it even allude to such. Rather, it deals with the problem of "inward sin", which the Divine Elucidation has commanded us to rise above and avoid.

There is no need to explain that outward sin refers to the acts of disobedience that are committed by the limbs and organs, such as the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, and the foot. These include backbiting, slander, lying, looking at that which is unlawful, and so forth. As for inward sin, it is that which the devout worshippers warn against,

because its effects are more dangerous. People are not aware of it, but nothing is hidden from the Lord of all people. It includes ostentation, envy, arrogance, and malice, and its effects manifest themselves in the relationship between people and groups. The danger it poses to da'wah work is severe, and its effects can be utterly destructive. Maybe now, fifty years later, we can grasp the danger of those effects, which have become clearly visible.

Divesting da'wah work of personal and group interests is of the utmost importance, but that cannot be realised unless the work is sincerely for Allah and far removed from the pleasures and interests of the ego.

May Allah have mercy on my master, my father, the martyr, who was extremely vigilant about da'wah becoming a means for personal gain or an arena for conflicts and disputes.

May Allah have mercy on him for being a caller. May Allah have mercy on him for being a guide. And may Allah have mercy on him for being free of this worldly life and its ambitions, for he desired Allah's pleasure and acceptance.

Attention must also be drawn to the efforts of the translator, my brother Ustādh Mahdi Lock, who expended sincere effort in translating this book, as well as other books before this one. This was after he chose Nawa Books, run by Brother Jalaluddeen, to print it and publish it, and this, in turn, was after both of them had acquired the consent of the publisher in Damascus (Dār al-Fikr) as well as that of the author's heirs, may Allah have mercy on him.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of all Creation.

Muḥammad Tawfīq Ramaḍān al-Būṭī

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

All praise belongs to Allah, the One who grants every success, and blessings and peace be upon our master, Muḥammad, and upon all his Family and Companions.

To proceed; the truth – as they say – is indeed bitter!

Perhaps the most significant cause of its bitterness is what happens when it is revealed and disclosed; people are criticised for what they have done and they are exposed.

The bitterness is not mitigated – and I do not say it is eliminated – unless one travels the path towards disclosing the truth with absolute sincerity, completely free of any other objective.

If the seeker of truth sticks to this path, he has an excuse before Allah and His slaves. He is not obligated to find himself incapable of changing the nature of things, of transforming the bitterness of medicine into sweet sugar. Facts – no matter how burdensome or bitter they appear to be – are more beneficial for the individual and the collective than the sweetness of fleeing from them or arguing with them.

It is a sufficient excuse for the seeker – if he sticks to this path – not to obligate others to bear the burdens of truth any more than he is willing to obligate himself, and not to make them taste any bitterness unless he himself has tasted it beforehand. He must not make himself

out to be an infallible prophet, spreading his criticism amongst people from the minbar of infallibility and then declaring that he himself is transcendent above all of it.

Instead, by observing his own self and criticizing his own mistakes, he should warn others against deviating the way he deviated and making the same mistakes he made. That way, he can make his friends and brethren enjoy sincere advice and guidance just as Allah ennobled him to enjoy it.

Is there any error or delusion in what I am saying?

This is the foundation that the papers in this book are established upon. I wanted – and Allah is my witness – sincere advice that I could give to myself before offering it to anyone else.

These papers, however, strike a nerve with certain people, because they are critical of these people and attempt to rectify their situation. Furthermore, their discomfort has some strange repercussions for which there is no scope to elucidate nor benefit in discussing.

I was told about the position of these people and I said, 'It is the truth. I do not know of any alternative.' As for infallibility, I do not know of any person who bears it after the Messengers and Prophets ﷺ. As for rejecting severe advice, I do not know of any Muslim who is sincere in his Islam who would be content to sit himself on such a throne of arrogance!

As for the moral way to implement this sincere advice, there is nothing better than the Prophetic way, the approach of the best of creation, Muḥammad ﷺ. He would give sincere advice and teach his Companions that, {The religion is sincere advice.}

He would criticise but without mentioning names or hurting the feeling of individuals. Instead, he would say, 'Why do certain people do such-and-such?' Then he would not concern himself with how that criticism was received, regardless of whom it was intended for.

As for the possibility of there being mistakes in some of what I have written, I have listened closely. If I have made a mistake, forgotten to include some stipulation, or allowed some fact to escape me, I have always been open to being corrected, reminded, and made aware, but I have not heard anything from anyone. The only exception is comments regarding a paper I called 'Our Problems Are Moral, Not Intellectual'; someone came to me and said, 'No. Our problems are intellectual and not moral!'

Other people came to me who had been made to think that I was advocating nothing but morals, devoid of intellection and knowledge, and that I was declaring to them that there was no need for intellection or knowledge!

My response was that I have never written anything that would even indicate such! No one who understands the rules of language and what words actually signify would ever derive such falsehood from anything I have said, falsehood that I cannot even bear repeating.

Nevertheless, in this edition, the discussion will be much clearer, and I shall endeavour to remove any confusion or ambiguity.

This means, therefore, that I am republishing this book, and I could not be happier or more delighted with the success that Allah has granted

me. In fact, as I republish it, I am most grateful to Allah for making it a means of benefit and betterment for so many Muslims. And perhaps I was, and still am, the one most in need of that benefit and betterment.

As I republish it, the bitter agonies and adversities that Muslims are suffering from gives me more certainty, every day, that the disunity, futility and degradation that Muslims finds themselves in today is not so much because of their outward sins and disobedience, but because of the "inward sin" that they bear.

As I republish it, the bitter reality that Islam is in gives me more certainty, every day, that the Muslims' problem is a calamity that has afflicted their morals; it is not some imaginary crisis in their education.

This is despite the certainty that Muslims cannot live without education and knowledge, just as an invalid cannot live without the sun or air. However, the sun and air are one thing and that which restores the invalid to health is something else.

As I republish it, and Allah is my witness, I state that what I have written is not out of a desire to nourish malice or rancour, or to expose a particular group or congregation.

And how could I do so? That would embody the worst of what is discussed in *Inward Sin*; I have only written these papers in order to warn against such desires and to purify the heart from their stench and their remnants.

I see, however, a community in which this dangerous epidemic is prevalent (and a community is only made up of individuals), and thus I want to draw its attention to this epidemic, and I shall do so by talking about it but not elaborating on it. If Allah so wills, it will be out of sincerity for Allah, His Messenger, and the Muslims in general.

As I republish it, I stretch my hands out towards the Knower of the Unseen, in trembling submissiveness; I ask Him to make me amongst the Muslims for whom this supplication is realised:

﴿رَبَّنَا ٱغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِإِخْوَٰنِنَا ٱلَّذِينَ سَبَقُونَا بِٱلْإِيمَٰنِ
وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِى قُلُوبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا رَبَّنَآ إِنَّكَ رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ﴾

"Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and do not put any rancour in our hearts towards those who believe. Our Lord; You are All-Gentle, Most Merciful."
[al-Hashr 59:10]

Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Buṭī

INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

O Allah, for You is all praise as befits the majesty of Your countenance and the sublimity of Your authority. Glory be to you, O Allah! I cannot enumerate praises upon You; You are as You have praised Yourself.

O Allah, send the best of Your blessings upon Your Slave and Prophet, Muḥammad, and upon his Family, his Wives, and his Companions, just as you sent blessings upon Ibrāhīm and upon the Family of Ibrāhīm, throughout the creation. You are Praiseworthy and Glorious.

My Muslim brother, you asked me out of pain and agony:

There are more Muslims today than there were in the past, and the efforts they make for the sake of Islam are more prominent than at any time before. The bookshops are replete with all kinds of modern Islamic books, replete in a way that has never been witnessed before, and people are flocking towards them with great enthusiasm. Despite all of this, however, their striving for the sake of the Islamic community and for its return to supremacy seems to keep reverting and regressing, as if it can only move backwards and never forwards.

What is the secret behind this astonishing contradiction? How can natural antecedents not produce their natural consequents?

I have told you the answer before. They are scattered and divided. They have turned their backs on one another. Disunity is a tribulation; it corrupts every righteous action and prevents it from bearing fruit. How can it be any other way, when disunity has given way to mutual opposition?

You said to me, 'How can the people of evil come together upon their falsehood and then continue to cooperate and coordinate so well, while the people of righteousness cannot come together upon their truth? Instead, they remain divided and in opposition to one another?

My answer was that the people of evil have dedicated themselves to their falsehood and they know that they will not achieve anything unless they come together and help one another. There are no individuals among them with secret agendas that contradict what the collective is trying to achieve. They are all striving for the same thing, and they have come together because they know that cooperation is absolutely necessary. Because they are all sincerely striving for their common falsehood, they cannot turn their backs on one another, even if they do have different agendas behind their main objective.

As for the people of righteousness, they have not dedicated themselves to their truth the same way the first group have dedicated themselves to their falsehood. The truth of this group is cowering at the end of a road, cut off and deprived, while the other group's falsehood is crouching at the core of the ego's desires and lusts. Among the people of righteousness are those who adorn themselves with the truth and openly call to it, while secretly feeling out their ego's desires and lusts. There are also among them those who talk about the truth and speak about it repeatedly in gatherings or speeches, but if the truth commands them to something else, such as forgoing some of their rights or bearing some hardships, they abandon it and disregard it.

If this phenomenon is widespread among them, the confidence they have in one another will diminish or even disappear. Their coming together and cooperating in order to call to the truth will become very limited in scope, superficial and constricted. As soon as they break out of that narrow scope, in many cases division and even mutual opposition will arise.

My Muslim brother, I remember – while I was answering this question – how you were drowning in a whirlpool of painful silence. Then you got up and left, but you were still lost in thought.

As for myself, I have gone back to what I said to you. I have realised that I did nothing but expose you to a wilderness of anxieties from which there is no escape nor refuge. I was like someone who tells a sick person about some significant medicine that will strengthen his constitution but does not tell him a single thing about beneficial treatment or something that will alleviate his pain.

I seek refuge in Allah that my words be something that frustrate the soul and kill hope. If I did that, I would be adding a more dangerous and severe illness to an illness that is already there.

I then felt a sense of agony when I knew that my words had made the tribulation worse. I then thought that it would be better if I left the topic alone and did not say anything about it, which is what many other people have done.

Then I realised that nothing would save me from this agony apart from my prescribing a remedy for you.

I missed the opportunity to speak to you in that gathering you left, when you felt lost in thought and distress. Wherever you are, I shall not

fail to get a copy of this booklet into your hands, so that your anxiety and grief can turn into striving and positive action towards presenting this remedy and implementing it.

It is a bitter remedy to swallow, but that which mitigates its bitterness is the sweetness of faith.

The only thing I presume is that we are all believers in Allah, and that He is one god and He has no partner. In His Hand is all goodness and the Dominion, and He has power over all things.

The remedy that I am drawing your attention towards is described in Allah the Exalted's Book, and explained in the guidance of His Prophet ﷺ; **it is to relinquish inward sin.**

You might ask: 'And what about outward sin? Isn't relinquishing outward sin also part of the remedy?'

The answer is that it is an inseparable part of it. However, everyone knows about it, and maybe most of them adhere to it, and therefore drawing attention to it would be nothing new and there would be no benefit.

What most of them remain indifferent to is the other part, the part that if it is ignored, all of the Muslims' efforts and hard work for the sake of Islam fall apart and come to nothing.

The importance of this part of the remedy is because it is a hidden matter; Muslims do not have a means of apprehending it and monitoring it. If that were not the case, they would be able to monitor it amongst themselves the same way they monitor one another with regards to praying, fasting, and all other outward, practical acts of worship and rulings.

Its importance is also due to the fact that most Muslims today do not caution or warn against it, and it does concern them to look into it and do something about it. They do not give it any consideration when trying to establish the desired Islamic community.

This is why I have realised that I should continue the answer from where I left off and prescribe this immense remedy, which Muslims have long forgotten and neglected even though it is frequently discussed in Allah the Exalted's Book and in the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ.

I prescribe this remedy for myself first and foremost, for I am certain that I am the one most in need of it.

And then I prescribe it for all my readers, because I understand – as I have already told you – that it is the indispensable remedy. The state of the Muslims will not be rectified without it.

Our trust is in Allah, success comes from Him, and to Him we shall return.

THE INWARD AND THE OUTWARD *OR* RELIGION AND JUDGEMENT

No one disputes that the commands of the Islamic Revealed Law, on the whole, are divided into two categories: outward statements and actions, such as fasting, praying, enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong, working for the benefit of the Muslims, and that which is connected to the soul and the heart, such as sincerity, humility, love and hatred for the sake of Allah, fear of Allah the Exalted's threat and hope for His reward and pleasure.

Likewise, the prohibitions, on the whole, are divided into two categories: outward statements and actions, such as the prohibition against murder, theft, fornication, backbiting, and slander, and that which is connected to the soul or heart, such as the prohibition against arrogance, vanity, ostentation, malice, bearing grudges, and being attached to worldly embellishments and base desires.

It is also not disputed, by any Muslim, that a Muslim's outward acts of obedience cannot be sound and acceptable to Allah the Exalted if he is not striving and focusing on those other acts of obedience that are connected to the soul and heart.

If there is no sincerity towards Allah in his heart, his outward acts of obedience, whatever they may be, will not bring him nearer to Allah

ﷻ. If his soul has not been refined with the distinguished morals that Allah commands Muslims to have, no matter how pious or righteous he may make himself appear to other people, it will not benefit him at all.

The heart that is dominated by inclinations of arrogance, grudges, and malice cannot carry out acts of obedience of worship with a true sense of slavehood to Allah the Exalted.

If the tributaries of slavehood between the Muslim's heart and his outward obedience are cut off, it is simply not possible for him to draw nearer to Allah ﷻ. There is nothing to protect him from the slippery slopes of this world and the traps and snares of the *shayāṭīn* and his own base desires. It is like sticking fresh fruit to a dry tree; how long will it be before they wither and die?

The rulings of the Islamic Revealed Law being divided into these two categories is one of the most important matters that Allah the Exalted's Book draws our attention to, and in various ways.

Allah ﷻ has said,

﴿وَذَرُوا ظَٰهِرَ ٱلْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُۥٓ ۚ إِنَّ ٱلَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ ٱلْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ﴾

"Abandon wrong action, outward and inward. Those who commit wrong action will be repaid for what they perpetrated." [al-An'ām 6:120]

He has also said,

﴿قُلْ تَعَالَوْا۟ أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا۟ بِهِۦ شَيْـًٔا ۖ وَبِٱلْوَٰلِدَيْنِ إِحْسَٰنًا ۖ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوٓا۟ أَوْلَٰدَكُم مِّنْ إِمْلَٰقٍ نَّحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا۟ ٱلْفَوَٰحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ﴾

"Say: 'Come and I will recite to you what your Lord has commanded you': that you do not associate anything with Him; that you be good to your parents; that you may not kill your children because of poverty – We will provide for you and them; that you may not approach indecency – outward or inward;" [al-An'ām 6:151]

And on top of that, He ﷻ has said,

﴿فَمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَآءَ رَبِّهِۦ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَٰلِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِۦٓ أَحَدًۢا﴾

"So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act rightly and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord." [al-Kahf 18:110], because removing oneself from associating partners with Allah in one's worship is the peak of all inward rulings.

All the rulings of the Revealed Law depend on the heart being purified of inward sins and being adorned with praiseworthy morals and virtuous traits, and this is one of the clearest things that can be seen from Allah the Exalted's Book and the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ.

Allah ﷻ says,

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَن زَكَّىٰهَا، وَقَدْ خَابَ مَن دَسَّىٰهَا﴾

"He who purifies it has succeeded; he who covers it with disobedience has failed." [ash-Shams 91:9-10]

The Prophet ﷺ says in the agreed-upon ḥadīth: {Indeed, there is a lump of flesh in the body; if it is sound, the whole body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. Indeed, it is the heart.}

He ﷺ also says, in what has been related by Muslim, Ibn Mājah, and others, {Allah does not look at your appearances or your bodies. Rather, He looks at your hearts.}[1]

If this fact is obvious to you – and that it is a clear fact that should not be lost on any Muslim – the means of expressing it might differ, and it is a very straightforward discussion.

Some people discuss it by using the terms inward and outward. Others call it religion and judgment, and still others call it the law and the essence (*ḥaqīqah*).

All of these terms are appropriate, if the correct meaning is understood. If someone prays and he fulfils all the conditions and pillars, that is considered in the outward sense. In terms of judgment and the law, he has fulfilled Allah's right over him. If, however, he performed those acts out of ostentation, or vanity, or while holding some belief that would render him outside the fold of Islam, then he would not be regarded as having fulfilled Allah the Exalted's right in the inward sense, in terms of religion, and in view of the essence.

Therefore, there is outward and inward, religion and judgement, and essence and law.

They can agree in terms of ruling. This happens when the outward conditions and pillars, which are regulated and judged in this world, coincide with the inward obligations and conditions, which are only regulated and judged by the Sustainer of the skies and the earth. Such

1 This hadith does not mean, as some ignorant people think, or maybe they feign ignorance, that if someone corrects his intentions and purifies his heart, there is nothing wrong with his leaving his obligations and practical acts of worship. If someone rectifies his heart and purifies his soul, it is not possible for him to fall short in fulfilling Allah the Exalted's rights. The correct meaning of the hadith is that performing acts of worship and obedience without those acts being rooted in a righteous and sincere heart will not bring the slave close to Allah at all, because just as Allah the Exalted sees your outward actions, He also sees what dwells in the depths of your soul.

an action is accepted by Allah *and* it is accepted in the worldly sense. If the conditions are unfulfilled on either side, the action is rejected, both outwardly and inwardly.

And they can disagree in terms of ruling. This happens when only the outward conditions are fulfilled (or only the inward), in which case the action is actually invalid and rejected. The person performing it gains nothing, regardless of how beautiful and complete he makes his action look. This is the person whom the following applies to:

﴿وَقَدِمْنَآ إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا۟ مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَـٰهُ هَبَآءً مَّنثُورًا﴾

"We will advance on the actions they have done and make them scattered specks of dust." [al-Furqān 25:23]

You should understand, from the abovementioned, that these two sides – whatever you wish to call them – are inseparable; there can be no outward without the inward and no inward without the outward, and the same applies if one calls them essence and law or judgement and religion.

In elucidating this, al-'Izz ibn 'Abdis Salām ﷺ says, 'The essence is not separate from the law. Rather, the law is replete with the rectification of hearts, realisations and states, resolve and intentions, and other actions of the heart that we have already mentioned. Knowledge of the outward rulings is knowledge of the bulk of the Revealed Law. Knowledge of the inward rulings is knowledge of the finer points of the Revealed Law. No one denies any of this, unless he is a disbeliever or iniquitous.'[2]

As for the position that the inward or the essence refers to another revealed law that the intellect grasps by way of specific devotions or by attaining nearness to Allah the Exalted, and that it abrogates the

2 *Qawa'id al-Ahkam*, 2/179.

outward laws and rulings because the inward, in effect, replaces it, this is one of most dangerous ideas put forward by criminal hypocrites and libertines.

No one uttered this falsehood apart from hypocrites who infiltrated Islam. They pretended to adhere to it while seeking to plot against it and make it complicated and obscure. Sometimes they pretended to be people of *taṣawwuf*, and other times they put on the garb of the Shīʿah. They are neither this nor that, but they conspired and waged war against Islam and its people.

In his supercommentary on *ar-Risālah al-Qushayriyyah*, ash-Shaykh Muṣṭafā al-ʿUrūsī quotes Imam al-Ghazalī as saying, 'If someone claims that he has a station with Allah such that he is relieved of the obligation to pray, and that it is permissible for him to drink wine and consume the wealth of the ruler, as some ignorant Sufis have claimed, there is no doubt that it is obligatory to execute him. Indeed, killing him is better than killing a hundred unbelievers, because his harm is worse.'

Junayd ﷺ was asked about the state of these people. He said, 'People who disobey Allah by stealing and fornicating are better than them.'[3]

Al-ʿIzz ibn ʿAbdis Salām says, 'There are those who imitate people but they are nothing like them and bear none of their attributes. They are worse than highway robbers and waylayers, because they lie in wait for those who are seeking Allah. They rely on ugly words that they have uttered against Allah. They have disgraceful etiquette with the Prophets, Messengers, and the pious scholars who follow them. They forbid their associates from listening to the *fuqahā'*, because they know that the *fuqahā'* forbid people from associating with them and following them.'[4]

3 *Sharḥ ar-Risalah al-Qushayriyyah* by Shaykh Zakariyyā al-Anṣārī, 37.
4 *Qawa'id al-Ahkam*, 2/179.

When some people understood this false interpretation of the inward and the outward, or the essence and the law, and they had not become aware of the true meaning, which no Muslim should reject or be ignorant of, they were left with no choice but to reject the matter in its entirety. Thus, they denied that the Religion had an inward and an outward, or an essence and a law, or religion and judgment. This position was too much for them, and thus they condemned the notion that the Religion has this classification and categorisation. They had only understood it according to the aforementioned false understanding that was promoted by the hypocrites and libertines, which they did so discreetly, making people think it was part of *taṣawwuf*, or a miraculous wonder, or something that would complete one's faith.

There is no objection to this rejection of theirs, nor to their rejection of these words, which are really nothing more than terms that scholars have agreed upon in order to give expression to a true meaning, about which there is no doubt for the one who believes in Allah's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet ﷺ. Then a small, deviant, misguided group agreed to use those same terms in order to give expression to their deviance and misguidance.

What is important, however, which they must realise, is that the outward rulings of the Revealed Law, which are embodied in statements made on the tongue or actions performed by the limbs; these deeds are not accepted by Allah and man is not rewarded for them nor is his responsibility lifted if his heart is not in the state that Allah has commanded it to be in. The soundness of the soul and the heart is the indispensable foundation for the soundness of one's deeds and their bearing fruit.

When they have become certain of this reality, which is the essence and spirit of Islam, they can give expression to it however they wish to, and they can discard whatever terms and nomenclatures other people use and which they have no interest in.

The quintessence of the matter is that the Islamic reality that Allah the Exalted has commanded us to is comprised of cardiac motives working in harmony with outward behaviour and actions. Together, they follow the divine way that has been mapped out for us by both Allah's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet ﷺ; one without the other cannot give expression to any Islamic reality.

Were if not for the necessity of this harmonious relationship, there would be nothing to distinguish the believers from the hypocrites.

Were if not for the necessity of this harmonious relationship, *jihād* and sacrifice would have no meaning in Islam.

Were if not for the necessity of this harmonious relationship, you would see the Muslims of today at the pinnacle of might, unity, and strength. Their masjids filled to capacity, their thundering minbars, their tongues calling to Allah, and their overflowing sciences would be enough to take them to that summit.

The hearts, however, are far removed from and far behind all of this; there is no harmonious relationship between the outward and the inward, between the outward that we use to deceive one another with and the hidden reality that the Knower of the Unseen is fully aware of, for nothing deceives Him about anything.

THE GREATEST DANGER!

Do you know what it is, or have you never thought about it?

It is not the invading enemy who settles in and colonises your homeland. It is not the sect that breaks ranks and causes disunity. It is not those baffling weapons that warn of mass destruction. It is not that dreadful group that threatens half the world because the rate of production cannot keep up with the rate of population growth.

The greatest danger is something more severe and more dreadful than all of that.

It is that which enables the enemy to infiltrate homes. It is that which allows weapons to explode and fuels to be set ablaze. It is that which causes animosity and division and eliminates opportunities for unity and cooperation.

It is the worst of enemies without exception. **It is our own souls, between our two sides!**

Yes, the human soul that does not cooperate with righteous action and follow the true Islamic way is the greatest dangers for the Muslims of today. There is no doubt about that whatsoever.

This is because Islam, in its essence, is nothing more than a refining and nurturing of the soul, so that it can be rid of its normal traits, such as selfishness, arrogance, and that which is connected to the embellishments of this worldly life. Then, so that it can voluntarily submit to Allah the Exalted in absolute slavehood, just as it submits to Allah forcibly by virtue of being His creation.

That is when one's behaviour becomes one of the fruits of the soul's slavehood to Allah; the true nature of each confirms the other. True brotherly love takes the place of spiteful selfishness, and the soul surrenders to being Allah's slave instead of being arrogant and looking down on the creation. The soul becomes certain of the meaning of this life, which is really nothing more than a bridge to the eternal life, and thus does not become attached to this world and only takes from its blessings and comforts that which will assist it in following the straight path of Islam and attaining Allah's ﷻ pleasure.

This is how the desired harmony between the reality of this Muslim soul and the Islamic behaviour that brings Muslims together in cooperation can be achieved. Among the Muslims, you will not find any reason for animosity and mutual opposition. There cannot be any malice or hatred between them. There will be no worldly life for them to break ranks and compete over, or leadership position to vie for. Because of this, they will have indomitable strength and unbreakable unity, Allah will set them right with His true and manifest help, and they will live in their countries with dignity, honour, and security.

When the soul has had none of this nurturing – which is the state of our souls today – the Muslim comes to bear a dangerous dichotomy within himself. His personality is split between outward Islamic behaviour, embodied in specific actions and statements, and a soul that is impatient, distracted and drowning in worldly hopes and selfish ambitions.

The most that one can expect from the bearer of such a soul, in terms of Islamic virtues, is that he will adopt aspects of Islamic behaviour that will benefit him, while not burdening himself with anything that might cause him to lose out. Thus, outwardly, he is fulfilling Allah's right and struggling for His sake but inwardly, his soul is chasing after worldly ambitions and selfish aims.

For a person like this, the Religion is nothing more than a shield that he uses to protect himself from being rebuked for his inward state, or a veil to hide from people the true nature of his soul.

It is preposterous to think that the sought Islamic community will emerge out of a shield or veil of religiosity, without there being any effort to subdue the soul and go against its selfish desires and aspirations.

How easy it is for the bearer of such a soul to make excuses and give himself means of escaping legal accountability. He puts a halo of mist around himself to hide his secrets from people.

However, the Religion itself will not be deceived by any of this.

Someone came to the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and made the excuse that he would be exposed to temptation if he took part in the *jihād* against the Romans and saw their blonde women, so Allah sent down the following:

﴿وَمِنْهُم مَّن يَقُولُ ٱئْذَن لِّي وَلَا تَفْتِنِّيٓ ۚ أَلَا فِي ٱلْفِتْنَةِ سَقَطُوا۟ ۗ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌۢ بِٱلْكَـٰفِرِينَ﴾

"Among them are those who say, 'Give me permission to stay. Do not put temptation in my way.' Have they not fallen into that very temptation? The Fire hems in the disbelievers."
[at-Tawbah 9:49]

There were those who came to him ﷺ and said, out of supposed meticulousness, 'Our homes in al-Madīnah are exposed to the enemy. There are only women and children in them.' This was so that they could extricate themselves from digging the trench. Allah then sent down this verse regarding them:

﴿وَيَسْتَـْٔذِنُ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمُ ٱلنَّبِيَّ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّ بُيُوتَنَا عَوْرَةٌ وَمَا هِيَ بِعَوْرَةٍ إِن يُرِيدُونَ إِلَّا فِرَارًا﴾

"Some of them asked the Prophet to excuse them, saying, 'Our houses are exposed', when they were not exposed; it was merely that they wanted to run away." [al-Aḥzāb 33:13]

How can Allah's victory for the Muslims be realised if their tongues and statements are just claims made over here while their souls are wandering over there, competing and vying for this worldly life and its desires?

None of the components of Islamic victory can ever bear fruit in the lives of these people.

They do not agree amongst themselves, because their tongues fervently say one thing and at the same time, their souls are straying towards other matters. Thus, there is no true objective that unites them, no clear aim that brings them together.

Furthermore, they do not trust one another, because each of them knows the truth of his own soul and sees that as evidence for the truth of other people's souls.

They do not sincerely love one another, because their souls are attached to this worldly life and profiting from it. Envy spreads between them; none of them can acquire any rank, position, or wealth except that other people's souls burn with envy or their hearts rage with spite. Maybe one of them will have more sleepless nights worrying about

these feelings than he would worry about the state of the Muslims, or worrying about what his final outcome will be when he stands before Allah, Mighty and Exalted is He.

They can only work together to a certain extent, which is the extent necessary for each of them to secure his interests. It ends when each one of them has attained his lofty reputation and rank, which means that they were only cooperating to attain those ends, which can only be attained in that way.

If they try to go beyond that, you see them breaking ranks and splitting up, and each one of them has his own excuse for doing so. At that point, if you were to look for agreement, cooperation, and brotherhood, you would not find any trace of it.

Based on all of the aforementioned, they are not granted victory, because the One in whose hand is support and victory is looking at them and knows their true state. Nothing about them is hidden from Him. You might see huge crowds, or hear moving, fear-inspiring words, or you might see a brilliant, accurate plan; none of this will strike fear in an enemy, create any union, or establish a university, because it is just scum, and scum does not scare anyone.

May Allah's blessings be upon the one who warned the Muslims of this great danger when he said:

{The nations will invite one another to attack you just as people invite one another to eat from one dish.} They replied, 'Will we be few in number at that time, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, {No, you will be many, but you will be scum, like the scum of a flood. Allah will remove the fear of you from the hearts of your enemies, and will put *wahn* (feebleness) in your hearts.} They then asked, 'What is *wahn*?' He replied, {Love of this worldly life and hatred of death.}[5]

5 Related by Abū Dāwūd, and its chain of transmission is authentic.

THE SOURCE OF THIS DANGER

The source of this great danger is one thing: **the heart's attachment to this worldly life and giving it a higher rank than it deserves, i.e. higher than the rank that Allah ﷻ has given it.**

This worldly life is not – as some people imagine – confined to money, land, and real estate. Rather, it is embodied in all the desires that the soul inclines towards, such as influence, rank, leadership, prestige, and relying on various external comforts.

This is all part of the worldly life that Allah tests man with, so that he can struggle against his soul, overcome it, and free himself from it. After that, he can lead it towards pleasing Allah ﷻ.

When the heart is attached to worldly desires and it is not able to free itself, and man does not struggle against his soul in trying to do so, all kinds of diseases of the heart stem from that, diseases that are considered the most damaging for Muslims.

The heart is thus afflicted with pride, envy, ostentation, vanity, and all kinds of malice and malevolence. The soul is overcome with greed and there is no concern for the Hereafter and its reward. There is little

fear of Allah's immense punishment. At that point, *jihād* becomes a competition for this worldly life, after it had been a struggle for emancipation from its slavery and overcoming its temptations.

Contemplate the ḥadīth of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, in what has been narrated by the two *Shaykhs*[6]: {By Allah, I do not fear for you poverty. Rather, I fear that this worldly life will be presented to you on a platter for you just as it was presented to those before you, and thus you will compete for it just as they competed and you will be destroyed just as they were destroyed.}

How does this destruction come about?

As I have already told you: due to its attachment to this worldly life, the heart becomes afflicted with these dangerous illnesses and diseases. Then the unity of the Muslims is broken and whatever trust there is between them dissipates, and thus they become enemies to one another, as groups and as individuals. They consume one another in a fire of animosity and hatred. The enemy then reaps the rewards of this by subjugating them and defeating them.

If these Muslims were to die by being strangled or being demolished in their own homes it would be more honourable for them than this destruction described by Allah's Messenger ﷺ, which has come to pass just as he described.

6 Al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS DANGER

The most widespread consequence of this danger is what I have already explained to you: the pillars of the Islamic community are destroyed, the Muslims become divided, and Islamic work becomes nothing but empty slogans and fruitless acts.

And there are other consequences. For many Muslims, Islamic work is turned into nothing more than empty planning and activism that only effect their lives in the most superficial of ways. If Islam has less and less authority over the heart, and it continues to diminish until it has no authority whatsoever, this worldly life (along with its desires) and the soul (along with its ambitions) takes over.

The bearers of these hearts appear to people to be Muslims. They wish that Islam would return to its position of might and authority, so that they can raise their heads high and have power and control. This is a worldly ambition; it does not contradict what has taken over their hearts and what their souls are attached to. Thus, to give victory to Islam, they do what other people do to give victory to their movement or denomination: **meaningless activism expressed via superficial ideas, theories and organisations.**

It has escaped them that there is a massive difference between the nature of Islam and the nature of these other ideological movements.

Islam, in its essence, is based on realising the meaning of slavehood to Allah within one's soul. This is the point of departure for every action, movement, or struggle for its cause, and it commands the Muslim to rectify his heart and his soul before anything else.

As for these other ideological movements, they do not command their followers to any of this. They are not obligated to avoid what the Qur'ān has called **inward sin.** This is because their call starts with activism and ends with activism. Naturally, the soul just goes along with it, because it is not commanded to abandon any of its desires or passions.

However, most Muslims ignore this fundamental, important difference, and they neglect (as a result) the rectification of the heart and soul. It makes them imitate others in their methods and they confine themselves to what they see others doing: **debates, arguments, meetings, diversity of opinion, the establishment of programs, and nothing else.**

Maybe many of them will make light of their worship, their remembrance of Allah, attending congregational prayers, and other acts of drawing nearer to Allah with which one strives to revive one's heart and wake it up to the truth of Islam, as well as rid it of the illnesses that we have been talking about. They consider all of that to be for the common folk, not for those who are devoting themselves to the Islamic movement and the Islamic call!

It is an astonishing and distressing delusion. Its cause is what I have said: ignoring the huge, fundamental difference between Islam and these other ideological movements. Their ignorance, in turn, is due to their lack of struggle against the soul and not abandoning it along with its desires and ambitions.

What I am saying does not mean that Islamic work should not rely on any planning or activism. Rather, what I mean is that the

success of any Islamic work depends on an indispensable, essential foundation, which is the rectification of the heart and its being purified of worldly desires.

There are still other consequences. For example, that astonishingly mistaken view of those who take it upon themselves to watch their hearts, and strive via various legitimate ways to rectify their souls

Many people think that these people busy themselves with something that is of no benefit and bears no fruit, and maybe they say that it is innovation and misguidance that has not come from the Religion!

The truth, of which there is no doubt, is that these people are fully aware of Allah's right over them and they adhere to it and do not deviate from it. What they have taken upon themselves is what the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, his Family, and his Companions were sent with; **it is the core and essence of Islam. There is no good in a person's Islam if that Islam does not refine his soul and also rectify his heart and rid it of this worldly life.**

Yes, it is blameworthy when someone confines himself to these devotions and thinks nothing of the necessity to enjoin the right, forbid the wrong, and fix what has become corrupt. Such a person renders void many of Allah's obligations, on the pretext that he is rectifying his soul and refining his state.

His obligation, however, is to be a Muslim in the fullest sense, fulfilling all of Allah's rights, starting with struggling against

his soul and then moving on to rectifying his family and relatives. After that, he works with his brethren in order to establish a sound Islamic community.

Another consequence of this great danger is that a false tribalism can take root and thrive in the soul, a tribal loyalty towards whatever it is that the bearer of the soul affiliates with. It could be a family, a tribe, a *shaykh*, or a congregation. This tribalism will make him look down on his friends and brothers who do not share the same affiliation. The soul continues to be nourished by this feeling and comes to rely on this perception, until the mind of the one bearing that soul completely loses sight of the meaning of ﴿إِنَّمَا ٱلْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ﴾ **"The believers are brothers."** [al-Ḥujurāt 49:10] Instead, he creates a very narrow brotherhood according to his own understanding, which in turn produces various harmful effects without him even noticing them or being aware of them.

One of the most conspicuous effects that you might find is when some people's appreciation of an idea or principle turns into sanctification of an individual or entity! Then the individual that he sanctifies becomes the measure of the truth that he believes in, instead of the truth itself being the measure by which individuals are evaluated and appraised.

Conversely, this individual will not see anything worthy of consideration or contemplation outside whatever he is affiliated with. If it is the truth – in his imagination – and is the only source for that which

is pure and infallible, other people possessing something that contradicts it is proof – in his view – that it is false. If it agrees with it, then it must have been taken from it and be a branch of it!

How many people go astray like this! How many people change Allah's rulings and Revealed Law for this reason!

May Allah have mercy on the great Islamic preacher *Badīʿ az-Zamān* Sayyid an-Nūrsī. He noticed one time that among his students were those who would sanctify a school of thought and magnify the truth therein because it had been distinguished by an-Nūrsī. They would believe that the exemplar to follow was what was embodied in his person, so he wrote a detailed letter to his students in which he said the following:

"Beware of attaching the truth that I am calling you towards to my sinning, transitory person. Rather, you must immediately attach it to its most sanctified source: Allah's Book and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet.

And you should know that I am nothing more than a middleman for the All-Merciful's merchandise.

You should also know that I am a human being and not infallible. I could sin or go astray, and then the outward truth that you have attached to me becomes disfigured by that sin or deviation. Then either I become an exemplar of deviation and sin for people or I become someone who turns them away from the truth because I disfigured it and mixed it with my deviations and sins."

This dangerous tribalism goes back to the nature of egoism within a person, which is one of the most dangerous diseases of the heart that the Muslim must treat and persistently struggle against in order to rid himself of it.

Egoism can all be embodied in individualism for some people. They are the people who sanctify their individual personalities more than being part of a people, group, or congregation.

In other people, it can be embodied in collectivism. They are the people who are so engaged in their association with a group, organisation, or congregation that they do not think about their individuality.

It might even be embodied in some manifestation of calling to the truth, such as someone who becomes angry become of some wrong perpetrated in his presence and he seems it a belittlement of his religious personality!

You will see one of them become extremely angry because – presumably – the sanctity and nobility of the Religion was violated, but if you were to look into his soul, you would see that he only flew into a rage because the sanctity and nobility of his own person was disturbed. A sign of this is that if he did not bear a known religious appearance and none of the people committing that wrong were aware of him, he would have passed them by without paying them any attention or concern.

Then there is the person who is affiliated to a *shaykh* or congregation; he never ceases to be a zealot for that individual or that organisation. His egoism leads him to have such zealotry that he thinks that the sincere Muslims are only those who are affiliated to his *shaykh* or his congregation. All other Muslims are of a second class. If a Muslim is not with his *shaykh* or congregation, he must be against them!

This **collective egoism** can also be embodied in teachings and slogans that the individuals affiliated with that group are made to think are part of the essential teachings of Islam.

The remedy for the tribalism that stems from the egoism I have described is not for the Muslim to leave the *shaykh* that he is learning from, the spiritual guide that he is benefitting from, or the congregation that he is working with. No. This is not the remedy.

Rather, the remedy is for the Muslim to realise that his *shaykh* that he is learning from, the spiritual guide who has taken him under his wing, or the congregation that he is working with, **is a means and not an end**. Furthermore, the means are only important to the extent that they are in harmony with and agree with the end, which is the foundation.

When the Muslim realises this, he knows that his loyalty should only be for the end, which is Islam itself, and that his connection to Islam by means of a *shaykh* or congregation should only be according to the extent that it fulfils this loyalty for him in the best way, and allows him to submit to Allah's religion and adhere to its rulings.

When the Muslim augments his loyalty to this reality with more attachment and love, egoism melts away in the blaze of that attachment. There will be nothing to embody either individualism or collectivism. Instead, the nature of his state will turn into one of self-sacrifice for the sake of Islam as it is, and his connection to others – whoever they may be – will be under the shade of that loyalty and under its care and supervision.

Thus, his love for his *shaykh* does not distract from what Allah ﷻ has obligated upon him, nor does his following a congregation or brethren drive him away from being loyal to all other sincere Muslims. This is because his connection to his *shaykh* or congregation is merely a branch of his essential, firmer connection to Allah's Book and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger ﷺ and the principles and rulings that they lay down.[7]

7 It should not be understood that these indispensable words are to discourage the Islamic

In summary, all the problems and afflictions that the Muslims are suffering from today stem from this great danger.

If it were not for this danger, their hearts would overflow with sincerity and goodwill, and then trust and confidence would spread amongst them. If that were then achieved, they would then be able to work together and get things done in the fastest and easiest way possible.

They would then increase in power and strength, and their enemies' hearts would become filled with fear. Their dignity that was stripped from them will be returned to them, and they will reclaim their sublime position over this earth.

However, when their hearts are devoted to this worldly life and its temptations, such as wealth, rank, position, or various desires, competition becomes widespread amongst them and they become selfish. Grudges and malice take over their hearts and they look at one another with envy and scorn. Whatever mutual trust they had is erased and is replaced with suspicion.

The enemy then discovers these painful maladies and afflictions among them, and thus focuses on them and exploits them in order to destroy them as quickly as possible.

---

call, or to form a new congregation of Muslims that separates himself from other groups and congregations and travels its own path.

Rather, what we should have no doubt about is that an abundance of divergent group and congregations that have conflicting views and attitudes brings more afflictions upon the Muslims and causes more division and animosity.

Instead, we say that the sincere Islamic call cannot be protected from weakness and division unless there is constant awareness and caution regarding falling into these kinds of pitfalls and mistakes.

To the extent that Islamic preachers open their hearts to sound criticism or good instruction, their work will ripen and their strength will become more cohesive.

To the extent that they reject sincere advice and sound criticism, the factors of division will increase and they will fall into disunity and broken ranks.

As for any concern for Islam, the Islamic call, and drawing up plans and ideas for that purpose, none of it will move someone who is still or rectify someone who is corrupt, and even an ignorant person can see right through it.

Unfortunately, however, it could mislead gullible youth. The tender flames of Islam are kindled within them, and they have fresh ideas. They hardly see an outward aspect of concern for Islam or hear embellished words about it except that they are flung into a sense of enthusiasm and sincerity, to strive, work, and struggle as much as they are able to.

If Allah has mercy upon us for some reason, it is by virtue of these people.

If there is some barrier between us and Allah's wrath and hastened punishment, it is the sincerity of these people!

They are young people, using their wonderful youth to please Allah and strive on His path, which is surrounded by all kinds of temptations and desires. They have confirmed His promise and believed in His threat, and they have hung their hopes on His pleasure.

We thus call on You, Who inspires goodness and turns over the hearts; cleanse these hearts of ours of every attribute that takes us away from witnessing You, loving You, and clinging to Your religion. Gather our hearts upon striving for Your pleasure. Raise Your slaves whom You have put in the position of calling to You to the level of this sublime honour; increase them in sincerity, truthfulness, and self-sacrifice, and let them match the good opinion of these virtuous youth. Indeed, You hear all supplications.

THIS IS THE REMEDY

Before I tell you about it, I need to ask you something:

Do you know the problem, and are you truly aware of the malady and its diagnosis?

I say this because understanding the problem is equivalent to being halfway towards solving it, and affirming the reality of the malady is half of its treatment.

If you do not believe what I have said to you, and you doubt that the underlying factor behind our tribulation – however it manifests itself – is this great danger that I have explained, **prescribing the remedy is of no benefit, because the incentives for using it are absent.**

On the other hand, if my words have settled in your soul, and you are certain that this is the secret behind everything that we complain about, you will pay close attention to what I am saying, and as long as you are sincere with Allah ﷻ in your Islam, you will try to use this remedy as much as you are able to, and you will call people to it and remind them of it.

It will be easy for you to have certainty that this is the remedy for which there is no alternative, and you will assert that all Muslims – regardless of class or rank – are in constant need of using it and benefiting from it.

I prescribe it for myself first, and then I remind whomever from the Muslims wants to be reminded. I ask Him ﷻ to make us among those who urge one another to the truth and urge one another to steadfastness therein.[8]

A student sits in an exam room, totally absorbed in answering the questions. He asks the invigilator for a glass of water and when it is brought to him, he drinks the water, his eyes become fixated on the glass, and he starts thinking about it. He starts contemplating how clean and delicate it is, and wondering about the factory that made it.

The student forgets the exam and the questions, and the time that is quickly ticking down, as he becomes totally immersed in looking at the glass.

What do you think is the remedy that will wake this student up and get him back on track?

It is something very simple.

8 (tn): Please see Sūrat al-'Asr 103.

The remedy is for someone to remind him that he is in an exam room, and that there is little time left. The invigilator will soon be coming around to collect the papers.

The issue is the same. There is no difference between the two scenarios.

The only difference, in fact, is that our exam room is much bigger and wider, and the subject of the exam is far more serious! As for the remedy, it is the same. Someone has to remind this person of his soul and of his essence. Someone has to draw his attention to the critical hours, or indeed moments, that he is living through, and draw his attention to the frightful outcome that awaits him. The best thing to remind this person is his own conscience.

The remedy is to remember, my Muslim brother, our true identity in this life, and then the function for which we have been created. Then we need to keep remembering it whenever we forget it or become heedless of it.

And what is our true identity? It is that we are slaves, owned by Allah ﷻ. All of our vicissitudes are in His hand. To Him alone is our final destination, and to Him alone belongs our worldly life and our Hereafter.

It is an identity that is stamped by Allah's ﷻ statement:

﴿قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ﴾

"Say: 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all creation." [Al-Anʿām 6:162]

Everyone has been branded with this identity, whether he is a believer or an unbeliever.

As for the function for which we have been created, it is to implement our slavehood, and to base our behaviour and all aspects of our worldly life on that.

This can only be achieved by rising above many of the characteristics and desires of the soul, and subjugating them to what Allah ﷻ has commanded. Then we submit to Him alone, in destitution and submissiveness. The heart should not be attached to anyone but Him. We ask for goodness from no one but Him, and we seek refuge from evil from no one but Him.

This behaviour is the difference between the believer and the unbeliever.

If we are aware of this, we understand the sublime end that we are inevitably headed towards in our worldly lives, and we understand how important this end is. At that point, you know that, aside from this end, all aspects of this worldly life fall into two categories:

Means that bring us to this end and obstacles that hinder us

What do you do if you are crossing a desert towards some end? You look at the means that will take you there, or at least take you closer, and you use them. Likewise, you look at the obstacles and how to avoid them or go around them.

This is exactly how we are commanded to conduct ourselves in this worldly life vis-à-vis the sublime end that we have been created for.

As for the means that take us to this end, we use them, and that is how we show gratitude to Allah for them. As for the obstacles that hinder us, we avoid them or go around them, and that is the patience that Allah ﷻ has commanded us to have.

Only two kinds of people are ignorant of this fact:

The one who denies Allah ﷻ, and thus he does not believe in slavehood, either as a function or as an end, and we have nothing to say to him in this regard.

The one who is absentminded because of all the temptations and distractions. This person's situation can only be remedied by being reminded and made aware.

Allah ﷻ knows the effects of these worldly temptations and distractions, how they make the Muslim forget the reality of his essence and function. Thus, He placed his complete identity right in front of him and expressed it in a few words: ﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ﴾ **"You alone we worship. You alone we ask for help."** [al-Fātiḥah 1:5] Then He commanded him to repeat this, as he stands before Him ﷻ, in every unit of every prayer. This is so that – if he is a sincere Muslim – he will resist these worldly temptations and distractions, and constantly remember that he is a humble slave who belongs to a sublime, overpowering owner. His function is to accept his complete slavehood to Him, and to be certain that there is no benefit nor harm except from Him, as He alone is the One who is asked for help in all matters.

When the Muslim remembers this fact and then continues to remain aware of it, or he quickly becomes aware of it again whenever he becomes distracted or tempted by the world, his heart will be rid of

everything besides Him. His heart will not be attached to wealth, rank, praise, vanity, or pride, nor will it succumb to rancour, malice, or envy, or to some false hope in another creation.

This is because he will have been made to absorb the full meaning of slavehood; that he is his owner's property. He only turns to Him for his needs and he only knocks on His door.

If he is given something, he is grateful, and he uses what he has been given to please Allah further.

If something is withheld from him, he is patient and he is certain that is best for him in his worldly life and his Hereafter.

This is the meaning of the Messenger of Allah's ﷺ words to Ibn 'Abbās, ﷺ: {When you ask, ask Allah. When you seek help, seek help from Allah. If all of creation came together to benefit you with something, they would only benefit you with something that Allah had already written for you. If they came together to harm you with something, they would only harm you with something that Allah had already written against you.}[9]

This makes it clear to you that in order for your heart not to be attached to this world; it is not a condition that man remove from his heart his need for it and his desires therein. That would contradict the natural disposition that Allah has created His slaves upon.

Rather, the meaning is that he should turn to Allah ﷻ for all of his needs, and only ask Him for what he wants and loves, and only complain to Him about that which causes him pain and suffering, realising His ﷻ words:

9 Related by at-Tirmidhi and he graded it as *ḥasan ṣaḥih*. (tn): It is also the 19th hadith in the *Forty Nawawiyyah*. Please see *al-Wāfi: A Thorough Commentary on the Forty Nawawiyyah*, p.139 for further details.

﴿فَٱبْتَغُوا۟ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ ٱلرِّزْقَ﴾

"So seek your provision from Allah." [al-'Ankabūt 29:17]

And: ﴿وَسْـَٔلُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مِن فَضْلِهِۦٓ﴾

"but ask Allah for his bounty." [an-Nisā' 4:32]

And: ﴿فَفِرُّوٓا۟ إِلَى ٱللَّهِ إِنِّى لَكُم مِّنْهُ نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ﴾

"So flee to Allah. Truly I bring you a clear warning from Him." [adh-Dhāriyāt 51:50]

If the slave's heart is attached to Allah, His slavehood to Him increases whenever his feelings of need increase and his various aspirations and endeavours. This is because the very substance of slavehood within man is his need and his weakness: ﴿وَخُلِقَ ٱلْإِنسَـٰنُ ضَعِيفًا﴾ **"Man was created weak."** [an-Nisā' 4:28] If he had no need of the One who created him with a natural disposition to be attached to Him, and if he was not weak and incapable of realising his aspirations, there would be no meaning to him adhering to this slavehood to Allah ﷻ.

Therefore, there is no contradiction between being pleased with Allah the Exalted's decree and complaining to Him. Rather, they are two components without which the reality of slavehood to Allah ﷻ cannot be realised.

Both components are found in his ﷺ supplication as he was returning from at-Ṭā'if, when he said, {O Allah, to You alone I complain about my weakness, my lack of means, and my humiliation before people. You are the most merciful of those who show mercy. You are the Lord of the weak and you are my Lord. To whom do You entrust me? To some stranger who scowls at me, or to an enemy whom You have given power over me? As long as You are not angry with me, I do not care,

but I would be happier with Your compassion. I seek refuge in the light of Your Face, by which darkness is replaced with radiance and the affair of both this life and the Hereafter are rectified so that Your anger does not descend upon me, nor Your wrath befall me. I seek Your pleasure until You are pleased. There is no strength nor power except by You.}[10]

Therefore, the remedy is for us to remember our true identity constantly, to know the function that Allah the Exalted has created us for, to make it an end that is at the forefront of our minds, and to use what the world contains as means to get there.

That is the reality of slavehood to Allah the Exalted, and it is the loftiest rank that the truly sincere (*as-ṣiddiqūn*) occupy and which those who strive for sincerity (*mukhliṣūn*) aspire to.

As for the masses, they mistake reality for manifestations of worship, and thus they cling to the latter and do not pay any attention to the importance and significance of the former.[11]

This is why those who carry out outwardly beautiful acts of worship are the majority of the Muslims, while those who realise their inward slavehood are the rare minority among them.

10 *Majmaʿ az-Zawaʾid* by al-Haythamī, 6:35.

11 For further details on this topic, the reader can refer to the book *Al-ʿUbudiyyah* by Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah, may Allah the Exalted have mercy on him.

THE ROAD TO USING THIS REMEDY

This is the remedy, but what is the road to using it?

What is the road to becoming dyed in the reality of slavehood to Allah alone, and thus one is not enslaved by wealth, rank, a personal objective, or any other bane of the soul, such as selfishness, pride, vanity, egoism and so forth?

There is no doubt that it is not an easy, straightforward road. Rather, it is a *jihād* that Allah the Exalted commanded us to when He said:

﴿وَجَٰهِدُوا۟ فِى ٱللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِۦ ۚ هُوَ ٱجْتَبَىٰكُمْ﴾

"Do *jihād* for Allah with the *jihād* that is due to Him." [al-Ḥajj 22:78]

﴿وَٱلَّذِينَ جَٰهَدُوا۟ فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا﴾

"As for those who do *jihād* in Our Way, We will guide them to Our Paths." [al-'Ankabūt 29:69]

This is the distinguishing factor between the believer who is sincere in his faith and the hypocrite who adorns himself with the appearance of religiosity and faith.

It is also the barrier that prevents the Muslim from falling under his ﷺ statement: {Wretched is the slave of the dirham. Wretched is the slave of the dinar. Wretched is the slave of velvet. He is wretched and degenerate. When he is pierced with a thorn, he does not pull it out. If he is given something, he is content. If he is not given something, he is angry.}[12]

It is also the guard that protects a person's faith against the two ravenous wolves that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ warned against when he said, {A person's covetousness for money and rank is more destructive to his religion than two ravenous wolves being unleashed among sheep.}[13]

Due to the importance of this *jihād*, and that it is the only way that leads to Allah the Exalted's pleasure and truly realising one's slavehood to Him, the righteous First Three Generations ﷺ expended all their effort and energy on it. They embarked upon the *jihād* of the soul and they resisted its evils in different ways. This concern even made some of them overdo it and overburden themselves, such that they overstepped the bounds of the Revealed Law and Prophetic guidance.

We want to look at what the First Three Generations agreed upon and has been pointed out by the Book and *Sunnah*, to remind ourselves that it is the essence and core of Islam, and it is the only thing that will lead to the realisation of the divine way that Allah the Exalted has commanded His slaves to. It is the indispensable key that will facilitate every difficulty, brings the Muslims together again, and realise every victory.

I remind myself of all of this first, and then I advise my brethren, and I ask Allah the Exalted to grant us his assistance and success.

12 Related by al-Bukhārī and Ibn Mājah.
13 Related by Aḥmad, at-Tirmidhī, and Abu Dāwūd.

These are the means:

1) Man must contemplate his essence and his final destination, that Allah ﷻ is watching him, and he must become aware of it again every time he becomes heedless or forgets.

Thinking is the activity of the intellect . Without it, the intellect has no value. Thinking is what frees the intellect from being dominated by the soul and its desires and knots. Without it, man cannot distinguish between rational evidence and psychical suggestions.

This is why Allah the Exalted concludes many of the *āyāt* describing the cosmos and His commands by saying: ﴿لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾ **"...so that perhaps you will reflect..."** [al-Baqarah 2:219 and 266]

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

"There are signs in that for people who reflect." [ar-Ra'd 13:3]

﴿أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

"So will you not reflect?" [al-An'ām 6:50]

This is why the greatest pillar in the Prophet's ﷺ life, as a believer, preacher, and *mujāhid*, was constant thinking and reflecting. It was not in vain that Allah the Exalted inspired him to distance himself from the din of the people, and their lives and corruptive elements, so that he could free his mind to think, reflect, and contemplate, in the cave of *Ḥirā'*, for long periods of time.

Whenever one can think and reflect whilst free from people's racket and worldly distractions and desires, the result is more truthful and accurate.

The human soul is thus independent of the motives and suggestions that come to it through various channels, all of which have open access. **One of them** is the intellect and pure logic. **Another** is the passions desires that are concentrated in the human constitution. **Another** is the reactions to feelings of inferiority, or motives of arrogance, or the sway of tribalism. **Another** is the knots that are created by malice, rancour, and competing for the scraps of this worldly life and its false ornaments.

It is not man's concern to listen attentively to all of these sounds. Rather, his concern is to listen attentively to the intellect alone and set it apart from all these other sounds!

This is achieved by way of regular hours of solitude or isolation. Man should set aside some time in which his intellect can be independent and free and he can ask about his final outcome and about the reality of all this tumult that is happening all around him. When he does so, he should seek succour by remembering Allah the Exalted's words and His profound admonitions as well as the words of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ and his sublime guidance.

By saying this, I am not asking you to isolate yourself from the community, and to live far away in some mountain caves or the depths of some valley. This is not man's natural disposition, nor is it the Muslim's function.

Rather, I am asking you to free your mind whenever you can be alone and take yourself into account.

In other words, I am asking you to do what the merchant does. He lives his life right in the middle of the racket and the noise of the markets, but that does not prevent him from isolating himself in one of the rooms of his house, from time to time, even from his family, his

children, and his friends, so that he can devote himself to his ledgers, his files, and his accounts. If he did not do this, his trade, which takes up so much of his time, would only cause him regret and loss.

I am asking you to find a way in which you can think freely without your thoughts being infiltrated by anything, whether you are absent-minded or attentive, such as inclinations of tribalism, interests that are spurious and unlawful, or any other psychical issue, so that you can be in a state of tranquillity and be reassured that you are contemplating just as a free intellect would.

This is what our master Muḥammad ﷺ did. He spent hours in solitude, isolating himself from people, and Allah's Messenger's ﷺ doing that is nothing but a lesson and legislation for his Ummah.

And do not forget that one of the most important things that will help you stay in a constant state of reflection of remembrance is to attend more and more gatherings of the righteous, and to incline towards them. Conversely, one of the most important things that will take you away from reflection and remembrance is to become immersed in gatherings of amusement and to incline towards heedless people, and to attend gatherings in which precious time is wasted, by delving into that which is of no benefit and the dead flesh of others is bitten into,[14] as the Qur'ān describes in the most reprehensible way and warns against

14 (tn): i.e. backbiting, please see Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt 49: 12

2) Adhering to a regular *wird* that consists of reading the Book of Allah the Exalted, as well as glorification, seeking forgiveness, and other remembrances of Allah the Exalted.

As for reciting the Book of Allah the Exalted, I do not think that I need to present to you all the authentic *ḥadīths* on the virtues of reciting the Qur'ān and contemplating it, and there is no difference of opinion between the Muslims that drawing nearer to Allah the Exalted by reciting His Book is one of the best of ways.

How often is it that a hard, harsh heart is only softened by the recitation of Allah's Book, and how often is a heedless, extravagant person not woken up by anything but contemplation of Allah's Book. How many eyes have not tasted tears out the fear of Allah except by gazing at Allah's Book.

All of the Companions ﷺ had a specific *wird* that consisted of reciting a portion of the Qur'ān every day and night. Maybe an emergency would prevent one of them from completing his *wird* on a given day, so he would make it up the following day, feeling pain and sorrow for what he had missed. This sometimes happened to 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ.

As for remembrance, glorification, and seeking forgiveness, this is the remedy that Allah the Exalted laid down for His Messenger ﷺ and repeatedly commanded to in the verses of the Qur'ān.

He said,

﴿وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ ٱلشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوبِهَا
وَمِنْ ءَانَآيِ ٱلَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ ٱلنَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ﴾

"And glorify Him during part of the night and at both ends of the day, so that perhaps you will be pleased." [Ṭaha 20:130]

﴿وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ بِٱلْعَشِيِّ وَٱلْإِبْكَـٰرِ﴾

He has also said, **"...and glorify your Lord with praise in the evening and the early morning."** [Ghāfir 40:55]

He has also said,

﴿وَٱذْكُر رَّبَّكَ فِى نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ ٱلْجَهْرِ مِنَ ٱلْقَوْلِ بِٱلْغُدُوِّ وَٱلْـَٔاصَالِ﴾

"Remember your Lord within yourself humbly and fearfully, without loudness of voice, morning and evening." [al-ʾAʿrāf 7:205]

He has also said,

﴿وَٱذْكُرِ ٱسْمَ رَبِّكَ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا، وَمِنَ ٱلَّيْلِ فَٱسْجُدْ لَهُۥ وَسَبِّحْهُ لَيْلًا طَوِيلًا﴾

"Remember the Name of your Lord in the morning and the evening. Prostrate to Him during the night and glorify Him throughout the long night." [al-Insān 76:25-26]

Based on the above, the scholars have made a consensus that the Muslim must have a regular *wird* consisting of glorification, seeking forgiveness, and recitation of the Qurʾān, and that the best time for that is the early morning and the evening.

If something prevents you from doing your *wird* at its normal time, it is best to make it up afterwards, at any time of the day or night, so that you being preoccupied from it does not lead to you neglecting it and being deprived of it.

It has been established in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* on the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb ﷺ that he said, 'The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, {If someone oversleeps and misses his *ḥizb*,[15] or a part of it, let him recite it between the dawn prayer and the noon prayer; it will be written for him as if he had recited it at night.}

Do not pay attention to anyone who claims that remembrance is an unrestricted act of worship, and designating a specific time for unrestricted worship is an unlawful innovation! If someone makes this claim to you, he is only doing so because he wants to drive you away from the remembrance of Allah the Exalted in the ugliest of ways. This is because the one putting the delusional idea in your mind almost never carries out this sublime act of worship, at any time in his life, because he is scared of falling into this alleged innovation! Maybe in these virtuous times, the early morning and evening, you will see him fast asleep, or amusing himself, or backbiting someone, without being aware of the gravity of the sin that he is in, which Allah the Exalted has very clearly warned against in His Book. Maybe his excuse will be that he does not want to fill that time with the innovation of doing remembrance at a specific time!

Then you should know that the effect of both reciting the Qur'ān and remembering Allah the Exalted is sublime in treating the maladies and illnesses of the soul. By persisting and persevering in both, the feeling of being watched by Allah takes form in the heart, that you are being watched in all of your actions, intentions, and conduct. If it ever occurs to you to do something or even intend something unlawful, this feeling will repel it, so that your actions are set right and your intention is corrected.

15 (tn): i.e. his portion of the Qur'ān

This is greatest divine protection in a Muslim's life. It is the *iḥsān* that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ described when he said that the Muslim worships his Lord as though he can see Him, and even though he cannot actually see Him, he is certain that Allah ﷻ can see him.

This can only be realised by constantly clinging to the Book of Allah the Exalted, remembering Him much, and busying one's heart with the knowledge that He is watching. It is the greatest remedy for purifying the soul and sweeping away any illnesses that have settled therein, such as pride, malice, envy, love of the world, and being attached to reputation, rank, and ephemeral worldly positions.

There is no doubt that by remembrance, we do not mean the tongue moving in the mouth, or the beads clicking in one's hand, or jumping in response to the sounds and tunes of *munshids*. Rather, what we mean by remembrance is what Allah the Exalted has intended in His book, when He commanded His Prophet ﷺ. It is what every scholar of the Arabic language know when someone says:

Dhakartu fulānan ṭiwāl hādh al-yawm [i.e. I was thinking about so-and-so all day]

It is the remembrance of the heart, the exercise of thinking, and the wakefulness of emotions.

If moving the tongue has some benefit, it is to wake up one's heart and emotions, and protect one from saying anything that would distract one from the remembrance of Allah the Exalted.

If there is a barrier between the tongue and the heart, such that the tongue is fervently engaged in remembrance, supplication, and glorification while the heart is immersed in this worldly life and its unlawful desires and ambitions, such a person is not one who remembers Allah

or is devoted to Him. Rather, he shows people the appearance of being someone who remembers, and the only benefit he derives from that is that it places him amongst them.

3) Lots of supplication to Allah ﷻ

This remedy is an act of worship that bears massive importance. In fact, it is the core and essence of worship, and it is the slavehood that is considered the loftiest rank of nearness to Allah ﷻ.

Allah the Exalted has emphasised His command of His slaves to supplicate, He has done so many times in His Book, and He has made it the most significant characteristic of His sincere slaves.

He ﷻ has said,

﴿ٱدْعُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً ۚ إِنَّهُۥ لَا يُحِبُّ ٱلْمُعْتَدِينَ﴾

"Call on your Lord humbly and secretly. He does not love those who overstep the limits." [al-'A'rāf 7:55]

And he has said,

﴿فَٱدْعُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ ٱلدِّينَ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ ٱلْكَـٰفِرُونَ﴾

"So call upon Allah, making your religion sincerely His, even though the unbelievers detest it." [Ghāfir 40:14]

And he has said,

﴿وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا۟ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَـٰحِهَا وَٱدْعُوهُ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا﴾

"Do not corrupt the earth after it has been put right. Call on Him fearfully and eagerly." [al-'A'rāf 7:56]

And he has described His sincere slaves by saying,

﴿إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا۟ يُسَـٰرِعُونَ فِى ٱلْخَيْرَٰتِ وَيَدْعُونَنَا رَغَبًا وَرَهَبًا ۖ وَكَانُوا۟ لَنَا خَـٰشِعِينَ﴾

"They outdid one another in good actions, calling out to Us in yearning and in awe, and humbling ourselves to Us." [al-Anbiyā' 21:90]

Man is only consciously aware of the importance of imploring and supplicating to Allah ﷻ when he feels an urgent need for Allah the Exalted, and he is certain that no one else can help him. He has no hope except of Him. At this point, he calls on Him with a sincere heart and he is fully alert and submissive.

This is similar to someone who lives in sin and constantly indulges his desires and lusts. He feels nothing but the immediate pleasure and gratification. If you were to advise him to supplicate to Allah to remove him from his current state, he would laugh at you, and see you as no different to someone who says, 'Ask Allah to bring deprivation and misery upon yourself'.

Maybe he will raise his hands and move his tongue to say some common supplications, or say *āmīn* after someone else supplicates, but that is not really a supplication. Rather, it is just the resemblance and imitation of supplication, which is as far as someone can be from supplication in the sight of Allah the Exalted, who said,

﴿ٱدْعُوا۟ رَبَّكُمْ تَضَرُّعًا وَخُفْيَةً﴾

"Call on your Lord humbly and secretly." [al-'A'rāf 7:55]

The most prominent example of this is those who are immersed in sin and when you try to advise them and remind them of Allah and His punishment, they raise their hands and says, 'May Allah guide us'!

He makes this supplication in front of you but in his heart is the exact opposite. This is because he is protective of his amusement and his disobedience and he does not want them to be snatched away from him. He also wishes that he had easier access to them.

He is only feigning this supplication in order to get away from your advice and cut off any argument against him.

As for when the disobedient person tastes the humiliation of disobedience in his conduct, and his heart feels the grief and distress that come with sins and misdeeds, and then he raises his hands and asks Allah for guidance and help; **that is the sincere supplication that Allah the Exalted commands to**.

It is also known that that which helps man travel the path of uprightness is nothing but Allah the Exalted's success (*tawfīq*). If Allah the Exalted's *tawfīq* were removed from a righteous, upright youth, he would plunge, from that very moment, into the deepest depths of deviation

Allah the Exalted's *tawfīq* for a Muslim is only realised by way of two matters: a sincere desire for goodness and sincere supplication to Allah ﷻ with submissiveness and humility.

When the Muslim is sincere in his resolve to be upright and seek Allah's pleasure, and then he beseeches Allah with a throbbing, meek, sincere heart, Allah will certainly put him on the path of guidance and protect him from the evil of his soul and *Shaytān*.

One day, in the courtyard of the university, a young man stopped me and complained to me, in a state of anguish and pain, that his soul was urging him towards evil and he was struggling to get control of it

and subdue it. He also mentioned that university life was making his soul even more voracious. He thus implored me to show him how to rid himself of this torment.

I said to him, 'Look at this agony and hope that you are presenting to me in the form of a complaint; present this complaint, with even more anguish, to your Lord ﷻ. Have an intimate conversation with Him and beseech Him at a time in which there is no one between you and Him. Ask Him to grant you *tawfiq* and strength. If you do that and you do so repeatedly, Allah will answer your supplication and free you from the torment of your soul in the easiest of ways.'

A person's ending up in a state that forces him to stretch his hands towards someone who will help him rid himself of the torment that he is suffering from and then he finds no one but Allah ﷻ; this is the essence of the compelled slavehood upon which Allah has created man and made him naturally disposed to. His standing at Allah's ﷻ door, in humility and submissiveness, calling on Him, asking Him, and hoping in Him; this is the essence of the earned slavehood that Allah commands man to practice.

Maybe you have seen people making light of supplication, arguing that whatever the slave asks for is either written in Allah's decree or it is not. If it is written, there is no benefit in his asking to be protected from it. If it is not written, there is no need for supplication whatsoever!

We do not want to answer this argument at length with what the scholars have said in the books of creed, as our discussion here is about something else.

However, we will say that Allah ﷻ has commanded His slaves to supplicate and He has promised them that He will respond:

﴿وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمُ ٱدْعُونِيٓ أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ﴾

"Your Lord says, 'Call on Me and I will answer you."
[Ghāfir 40:60]

Allah's promise is true and is never broken, and this is what concerns you, so why delve into that which is not your business or domain, and exhaust yourself over something that goes back to Allah the Exalted's planand His sublime power and authority?

Allah the Exalted's decree is one of his rulings, and the answering of supplications is a promise that He has taken upon Himself to fulfil. Your job is to submit to His ruling, to believe in His promise, and then leave the planning to Him.

The meaning of these words is that the Muslim is obligated to seek out, first of all, the hidden illnesses that his heart is suffering from and which no one else knows about. Then he must become aware of how dangerous they are and how they prevent him from seeking Allah's pleasure, and that he adorns his outward with upright, righteous conduct.

When he has become aware of that, he treats it – in addition to the other two remedies we have mentioned – with constant supplication to Allah the Exalted, with submissiveness and humility, and a broken heart. He must understand that no one can benefit him or harm him, cause him to die or live, or resurrect him, and that his heart is between two of the All-Merciful's ﷻ fingers; He is the One who can cure him of his illnesses and rid him of his banes and impediments.

Let him put forth sincere will and sound intention as a means and intercessor before Allah the Exalted, along with humility of the soul before His lordship and authority.

Furthermore, let him choose the best of times and the most likely of them for supplications to be accepted. Let him be especially keen to benefit from the time just before dawn, which is the time when the din of the disobedient dies down and souls are enjoying sleep, and thus Allah's watching of His slaves becomes manifest.

You should drag yourself out of bed at that time. Then perform *wuḍū'* thoroughly and stand before the Sustainer of the skies and the earth while being fully immersed in the humility of slavehood to Him. Then stretch your hands out to Him while being certain that He sees your humility and submissiveness, He hears your weeping and intimate conversation, and He watches your soul groaning in pain. Ask Him to purify your heart from its filth and to rid it of its banes, and to keep you away from both inward and outward sin. Have a sense of urgency in your supplications, as well as a lot of hope. Weep over your soul and the days you spent heedless of Allah the Exalted and heedless of His watching your heart.

If you do that and you do so persistently, Allah will answer your supplication and put your affairs in order. He will purify your soul and let you taste truthfulness in your worship and the bliss of sincerity in your supplication.

You must, however, maintain this state, because fleeing to Allah from the banes of your soul can only be in this way. It is the ladder by which you ascend to Allah ﷻ, and as long as you are alive you must continuously climb that ladder. Otherwise, your feet are on the verge of slipping at any moment, and then you will go back to where you were.

4) Avoiding consumption of the unlawful (which is a negative remedy)

The body that is nourished by unlawful wealth will contain – in most cases – a soul that inclines towards deviation and overstepping Allah the Exalted's bounds. If the soul stays within the bounds outwardly, dangerous illnesses and maladies will accumulate inwardly.

Unlawful wealth starts by taking the wealth of others without their consent. Then it branches into various types and forms until it ends up at various ambiguous matters that are likely to involve that which is unlawful.

If one is not able to rid oneself of ambiguous matters, one can – if one wants to – rid oneself of unlawful matters. If one can find an excuse for falling into the former, he will not find an excuse that he can cling to regarding the latter.

Nourishing oneself with unlawful wealth has very dangerous consequences in a Muslim's life, the least of which is his heart suffering from a strange hardness, and thus it cannot be moved by a preacher's exhortations or someone's reminders. No warning, no awakening of desire for Allah, and no frightening of Allah's punishment will benefit it.

If such a separation takes place between the mind and the heart, the mind understands without the heart being affected. The former submits without the latter's relenting. It is absolutely out of the question that the intellect alone can guide human behaviour, because the greatest influence is on the heart, which is the source of all desires and emotions.

When a Muslim neglects this remedy, his Islam becomes merely a slogan that embellishes his outward. As for his inward, it is lead down different paths by desires and passions and the soul's inclinations and dispositions.

When a Muslim continues to neglect it, and he does not care where his wealth comes from, none of the aforementioned remedies will benefit him. Reciting the Qur'ān will not wake him up from any heedlessness. Remembrances and *wirds* will not rectify his state in the slightest, nor will his supplication be heard or answered.

Muslim, at-Tirmidhī and others have related from the *hadīth* of Abū Hurayrah ﷺ from the Prophet ﷺ that he said, {Allah is pure and only accepts that which is pure. Allah has commanded the believers with that which He commanded the Messengers, for He the Exalted has said,

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلرُّسُلُ كُلُوا۟ مِنَ ٱلطَّيِّبَٰتِ وَٱعْمَلُوا۟ صَٰلِحًا إِنِّى بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ﴾

"O Messengers, eat of the good things and act rightly. Indeed, I fully know what you do." [al-Mu'minūn 23:51] and the Exalted One has said,

﴿يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا۟ كُلُوا۟ مِن طَيِّبَٰتِ مَا رَزَقْنَٰكُمْ﴾

"You who believe! Eat of the good things We have provided for you." [al-Baqarah 2:172]}

Then he mentioned a dishevelled, dusty man lengthening his journey and stretching out his hands to the sky, 'Lord! Lord!', and his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful and his clothing is unlawful, so how can he be answered?[16]

How many are the Muslims today whom you could measure by the standard of the prayer, outward acts of worship, the use of prayer beads, and their tongues being used for exhortations and embellished religious words.

16 (tn): This is the 10th hadith in the *Forty Nawawiyyah*. Please see *Al-Wafi*, p.83 for further details

And how few are the Muslims today whom you could measure by the standard of refraining from unlawful wealth and adhering to Allah's limits therein, and seeking Allah the Exalted's pleasure with regard to what enters their pockets.

How many Muslims have we seen who are reckoned to be among the best of them, who compose sweet words while calling to something lucrative that will necessitate deviating from Allah's balance and rule. How quickly does one of them plunge into it, without any fear or dread, and if a Muslim tries to warn him, he interprets away that which cannot be interpreted. By doing so, he formulates a new *fiqh* for which there is no foundation nor proof.

These four remedies are the ineluctable way to rectify the heart and rid it of the hidden illnesses that the Qur'ān has described as inward sin (*bāṭin al-ithm*).

Without this remedy and being concerned with inward sin, the Muslims will not rectify anything, they will not be brought together upon any truth, and they will not rid themselves of the various obstacles that they are complaining about today.

NAMES AND TITLES DO NOT CONCERN US

What, then, do we call the use of these remedies that we have been talking about?

Is it *taṣawwuf*? It is *sulūk*?[17] It is *tarbiyah*?

Maybe it is valid to use any of these three names, and maybe it would be valid to use another name or designations. There is nothing wrong with that.

Some people have called it *taṣawwuf*, and they are the great majority of those who concern themselves with this matter. Other people call it *sulūk*, such as Imam Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ.[18] This is all terminology, and there is nothing wrong with terminology.

However, if we want to talk about which name is best, there is no doubt that the best name and the one that most accurately describes that which is named is 'Islam'.

17 (tn): i.e. behaviour, conduct, and those engaged in it are called *salikun*.

18 See volume 10 of *Fatawa Ibn Taymiyyah*.

This is because Islam, by way of its two sources, the Book and the *Sunnah*, draws our attention to the danger of these hidden illnesses that are concealed within the depths of the soul, and it also shows us the remedy and teaches us how to use it.

In the conduct of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and the conduct of his Companions, who followed his way, we have the greatest practical example of this reality.

Is Islam, in its essence, more than this reality?

Another thing to bear in mind is that 'Islam' is the only word that firmly brings together the contents of Allah the Exalted's Book and the Sunnah of His Prophet ﷺ. In fact, it is the name that refers to these contents, because the word 'Islam' expresses the realisation of Allah's monitoring of His slaves, which is a necessary prerequisite for this treatment and its use. At the same time, it warns against the infiltration of anything that is not from Islam.

Conversely, calling it any of the other names can remove it – even if just in form – from the sphere of Islam, and thus it is not unlikely that it will be infiltrated by matters that are not from the essence of Islam and its rule.

We have certainly seen how innovations and reprehensible matters have crept into this sublime, essential part of Islam, after it had been stripped of its true, sound name and was then put under other names, slogans, and titles.

A third thing is that there are people today who think that the word *taṣawwuf* refers to an Islamic school of thought, and that those who practice *taṣawwuf* are just another sect among various others.

This illusion, or the receptivity of this illusion, has been exploited by many orientalists. They have dedicated themselves to studying *taṣawwuf* and analysing its philosophy and they have placed it in a separate framework, which gives the impression that it is something independent. They have done this in order to consolidate this illusion and make the Muslims think that the proponents of this *sulūk* are a sect who innovated this specific way for themselves, while all other Muslims have innovated some other way!

There is no doubt that this illusion appears to be real sometimes, because some inventions and reprehensible matters, which have nothing to do with Islam, have indeed crept in and are practised by some proponents.

All of this means that we should not replace the name 'Islam' with anything else, for any part of it.

I do not understand why anyone would fanatically cling to the name *taṣawwuf* if we all agree that we should follow Islam's sublime contents.

However, fairness dictates that we say that a large portion of those who adhere to this name have been linked with those who neglect rectifying the inward and adopting legitimate means towards doing so. They also adopt an oppositional stance towards what is called *taṣawwuf* on the whole.

There are some who look at those who take it upon themselves to persevere with remembrances and *wirds* and other legitimate devotions in order to repel the dangers of the soul and the only name they can find for it is *taṣawwuf*.

And there are some who do not want to do what these people are doing, because they think – in their own illusion – that it is something that has been added to Islam. Thus, they will call these remedies that

we have described and the hidden illnesses that we have pointed out something other than their real name. Then they will continue to deprive their Islamic lives of this massively important part of Islam, all because of this strange illusion.

If these people were to stop and think, they would realise that striving to rectify the soul and the legitimate means of doing so are the very essence and spirit of Islam.

They would also realise that the means that people use to rectify their souls are nothing more than the Islam that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ brought, and then they would only call it its real name.

Therefore, whenever that is which is called *taṣawwuf* has any independent, intrinsic structure in the illusion of some researcher, the Muslims will find that the name 'Islam' can accommodate and correctly express every aspect and branch therein.

MORAL *TAṢAWWUF* AND EMOTIONAL *TAṢAWWUF*

Everything we have discussed so far falls under **what is called moral taṣawwuf** (*at-taṣawwuf al-akhlāqī*).

It is actually an expression of the Islamic character that Islam brought and for which it outlined wise means of attaining.

As for other issues that fall under what is called states (*al-aḥwāl*), witnessing (*ash-shuhud*), annihilation (*al-fanā'*), *al-baqā'*, and so forth. Rather, they are descriptions for emotional states that those who take it upon themselves to make their hearts alert to the fact that Allah the Exalted is always watching, and they strive not to be distracted from Allah's remembrance by any worldly phenomena, gradually move through.

If one of them were to continue in this state for a period of time, his worldly distractions would dwindle and wane and he would start to recognise the Creator's sublimity, with all the attributes of perfection that are ascribed to Him. Furthermore, maybe this feeling will grow and have such a powerful effect on him that he will forget the universe and all of existence and only think about the Creator. This is what they call *al-fanā'*.

If he continues with the same conduct and he monitors his heart and his inward state in accordance with the guidance and rulings of the

Book and *Sunnah*, he will wake up once again and become aware of the world and its states while his heart remains firmly tied to the Creator ﷻ. Thus, he is able to interact with the world without being affected by it. He mixes and associates with people without being distracted from Allah the Exalted. This is what they call *al-baqā'*.

This is the rank that is ascribed to the Prophets and the truly sincere (*as-ṣiddīqūn*) and it is what the Prophet's ﷺ Companions were adorned with, as they had the most complete hearts and the greatest endurance.

Ibn Taymiyyah ﷺ mentions *al-fanā'* in his valuable book *Al-'Ubūdiyyah* and says, 'It is the annihilation of witnessing anything but Him, and this happens to many who travel the path (*as-sālikīn*). Due to their hearts' excessive attachment to Allah's remembrance, worshipping Him, and loving Him, and their hearts being too weak to witness other than what they worship and what they intend, nothing but Allah occurs to their hearts and they do not even notice anything else. When the one in *al-fanā'* reaches this state, his own existence is concealed in favour of His existence, his own witnessing in favour of witnessing Him, what he remembers in favour of remembering Him, what He knows in favour of knowing Him...'

Then he said, 'All of this *fanā'* contains deficiency. The great *awliyā'*, like Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and the forerunners from the Emigrants and the Helpers[19] never fell into this *fanā'*, let alone those above them, i.e. the Prophets. This only happened after the age of the Companions.'

If you have understood this, we can then say:

It is not permissible for the Muslim who sees a shortcoming in himself with regard to Allah, and notices diseases of the heart that remove him from Allah the Exalted, to spend any of his time talking

19 (tn): Please see Sūrat at-Tawbah 9:100

about philosophical and emotional *taṣawwuf* and to dedicate himself to studying the states of such people and explaining their various stations that we have briefly discussed.

These matters are personal experiences that can only be understood by experiencing them. There is no benefit for us to derive from them if we treat them as a branch of knowledge that can be read and memorised. We can only derive benefit from them if we treat them as a true, Islamic fact that man witnesses and experiences.

If you were to spend an entire lifetime talking about the states that these people experience, analysing their words, and seeking blessings from their escapades, none of that would bring you closer to Allah the Exalted in the slightest, as long as you pay no attention to the diseases that your soul is suffering from, such as pride, envy, attachment to the world, envy, ostentation, malice, and so forth.

I have not seen anything more surprising than people who leave the parts of *taṣawwuf* that embody Islam and its core, and which we discussed at length in the previous pages, and instead dedicate themselves to studying philosophies that they do not understand and delving into states of people that they are not entitled to delve into. Then they repeat the escapades that have been uttered by some of those who suffered from these states experientially and did not manufacture them out of pretence.

If those people are excused, because of this, for talking about them, these other people are not excused for imitating them therein and using their words as a subject of study and research and source of benefit!

I call on myself, I call on all my friends and brethren, and I call on all these people to dedicate themselves to purifying the soul; purifying the soul is the end around which the Revealed Law of Islam revolves. It is the remote target for everyone engaged in *sulūk* and *taṣawwuf*, apart

from those who have deviated from the path. It is this door by which the Muslim gains access to Allah's pleasure. It is the remedy for every affliction. It is the way out of every tribulation.

You who are engaged in this, take Ibn 'Arabī's advice and leave his *Futūḥāt*. Read his book *Ma'ārij al-Quds fī Muḥāsabat an-Nafs*, which is a book that unveils the flaws of Muslims and the dangerous illnesses and deficiencies that are hidden behind their celebrated and pompous appearances, such as ostentation, love of reputation, love of the world, and love of leadership. Leave him and his states and escapades, and whatever words of his you do not understand.

When the illnesses and afflictions of this world have been removed from your heart and you have not been influenced by a false tribalism; whether the world turns towards you or away from you, whether people praise you and laud you or rebuke you and defame you, it makes no difference to you; then you can enter that other door and can graze in that hazardous field.

OUR PROBLEMS ARE MORAL, NOT INTELLECTUAL

Everything that we have discussed means that we are suffering from a problem connected to morals and emotion; it has no connection to conviction or intellection.

It is amazing that there are people who are aware of this problem and they know about this great danger in our lives but instead of treating it with the methods that we have described, they seek to remedy it with more intellectual research and more philosophical theories, which they put forward and allow others to study and discuss.

It is as if the problem is a knot of ignorance that has become ingrained in the mind and not a dangerous illness that the soul suffers from!

What would be the benefit of elaborating on 'society', or using many different ways to expose the hostile plans of the enemies of Islam and the proponents of the intellectual attack, or being concerned with presenting more of the methodology of Islamic thought or the Islamic call, if the affliction that the Muslims are suffering from is not ignorance of any of the aforementioned matters but rather a chronic illness that has taken root in their souls?

After today, Muslims do not need any more intellectual studies. Muslims – despite their varying levels of education – have enough awareness of these matters to protect themselves, if the case that the matter were depended on awareness alone.

Rather, they need an extraordinary force that will push them towards action and application.

It is preposterous that application would be in the hands of the mind or intellect alone.

The extraordinary force they need is nothing but the force of morals!

The atheist who lives a life of doing whatever he wants and rejecting faith is not bound to this life of his because of something purely intellectual, as you might think. Rather, he is bound to it because of egoistic desires that have become ingrained within him.

The western scholar who delves into the mire of the material world and spends his time in vice does not do so because he is driven by a certain philosophy or theory. He is driven to do so because of a moral illness that he suffers from, even though he tries to hide this fact forever and ever.

I know a young man whom Allah guided after falling into deviation and atheism. His old friends and guardians gathered around him and tried to bring him back to his old ways.

When they had failed to convince him by way of intellectual debate and discussion, a former girlfriend of his said, 'But you are young. You are in the prime of your life. Enjoy your youth. You can be a "shaykh" later!'

I know a Pakistani man who lives somewhere in Europe and calls people to Islam. He was asked how successful his preaching had been and he replied, 'The European man does not need proof in order to know the truth. He comes to believe in the truth very quickly, intellectually and sincerely. However, the excuse that always holds him back is the lack of restriction that his soul enjoys and upon which his life is based, and thus none of these ideas that he believes in can help him escape the power of his soul.'

People like this will not be saved from the problem that they are suffering from by stuffing their brains with libraries full of theories and intellectual studies about Islam. Rather, only one thing will benefit them, which is to kindle the hidden depths of their emotions by focusing on the yearning of the heart.

The yearning of the heart is the balm without which there is no benefit in loads of books that are replete with meticulous ideas and brilliant analyses.

The yearning of the heart is the amazing secret that transforms man's life and brings the far near. It softens iron. It gathers the dispersed inclinations of the soul. It makes you forget the taste of this world and its temptations and replaces it with the sweetness of knowing that Allah is watching you and witnessing you.

The yearning of the heart does not come about by overburdening the mind and squeezing out more theories and studies. Rather, it comes about by bearing the soul with more acts of worship, and standing in humility at Allah the Exalted's door in the pre-dawn hours.

This yearning is what Muḥammad Iqbal could not find among Muslims, despite looking for it for a long time in the din of their debates, their brilliant studies, and their immense libraries!

Ideas, research, and studies have their indispensable benefit, but they are nothing more than one stage of the journey.[20]

Ideas and studies are limited, regardless of how broad their scope is. It is futile for us to go back and study these ideas from the beginning again every time we have finished studying them and researching them. We would just be stuck at this stage and would not be putting our effort into anything else, and our souls would be stuck where they are, attached to their lusts and desires.

Nevertheless, what we have affirmed is considered an intellectual issue that is connected to Islam, whenever we consider the contemplative side of it. The gist is that it is considered a link between the end of theoretical studies and the beginning of the implementation stage.

Let this intellectual link have its sufficient share of our Islamic studies and research, so that we do not fall into a vicious cycle of con-

20 Yes, all of that has an indispensable benefit. This is what we are saying. However, we should add that scientific research and intellectual studies are considered nothing more than a means towards a goal. If the goal is not realised, the means lose their value, obviously! How often does a man adorn himself with the means of knowledge and its rules and regulations, and his tongue possesses captivating eloquence, but you see the peak of hypocrisy in his behaviour What, then, is the value of his abundant knowledge and his penetrating intellect? If you were to look closely, you would see that the corruptive element in our Islamic community is the hypocrisy of many of its scholars, not the ignorance of some of its individuals.

Another thing we should add is that the process of understanding and knowing is absolutely necessary after contemplating the indications and premises, for the who contemplates 1 + 1 must inevitably arrive at certainty that it is 2.

However, the phase of implementing and applying that knowledge is a voluntary act; many obstacles, of all kinds, come between it and man in most cases. It is absolutely out of the question that these obstacles can be overcome without immense struggle and effort, which is the effort of nurturing and morals.

Look at this meaning and see how clear and accurate it is in the Exalted's words:

﴿وَجَحَدُوا۟ بِهَا وَٱسْتَيْقَنَتْهَآ أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا ۚ فَٱنظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَٰقِبَةُ ٱلْمُفْسِدِينَ﴾ **"and they repudiated them wrongly and haughtily, in spite of their own certainty about them."** [an-Naml 27:14]

The intellectual certainty was there, but the behavioural effort was smothered by the soul's pride and haughtiness.

Therefore, you must first overcome the pride of the soul and then bring it to the level of serenely accepting the truth. Then your soul will interact with that knowledge-based certainty and it will be harmonious, and it will be reflected in your conduct. That is when you will have solved the problem completely.

stantly debating with our enemies; every time we provide an answer to one of their problems, they present a new problem, and the back and forth never ends.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of everything we have said is that the Muslims today complain that they are divided and mutually opposed to one another, and they ask about how they can come together and unite.

We say that the Muslims have been divided by obstacles that are in their souls. If these obstacles are not removed, they will never unite upon anything or rectify their situation in any way.

These obstacles are greater than dialogues and debates, repeated meetings, and sporadic slogans.

We have explained and described these obstacles, their various types, and how dangerous they are to the lives of Muslims. Then we mentioned the remedy that removes these barriers and erases them from our souls.

If we wanted to summarise the journey in a few words, we would say that the acid that melts all of these barriers is sincerity (*al-ikhlāṣ*).

When there is sincerity for Allah's religion in the heart, pride is removed from the soul and is replaced with modesty. Malice and rancour are replaced with amity and harmony. Love of this world and chasing

after its positions and temptations is replaced with seeking Allah's pleasure and being saved from His punishment and threat. Tribalism, in all its shapes and forms, is replaced by loyalty to Islam as it is.

Ikhlāṣ is a word that is easy on the tongue, beloved to the hearts, and delightful to the ears.

This is why it is one of the most oft-repeated and widely circulated words. However, its meaning is of the greatest importance in an individual's life and it has the most profound effect on the community. It is also one of the most difficult things for the soul to put into practice.

Nevertheless, it has lost a lot of its importance and significance, and its effect has waned, because there are so many pretenders trading with it, liars adorning themselves with it, and people using it in empty slogans.

When sincerity has become firmly established in the heart, love of sacrifice becomes firmly established in the soul.

What does the sincere person sacrifice? There is no doubt that he sacrifices; the banes and impediments of his soul and well as its interests, in order to arrive at the truth that he is sincerely devoted to. The one who complains that he cannot find a way to sacrifice all of this, because he is so attached to it, must train his soul to sacrifice by following what we have mentioned.

As for the one who does not want to do this or that, let him refrain from claiming Islam and adhering to it. He should also stop complaining to us about how painful it is to see the Muslims divided and disunited.

The person who does not see anything stopping him from altering Allah the Exalted's rulings and playing around with them as he

likes, in order to retain some worldly position that he is attached to or to fulfil some psychical desire; there is no benefit in him saying a single word about the division and disunity of the Muslims. He has nothing to do with their tribulation, and he feels no pain or agony in his heart for them.

The person who lives in this world in order to feed his arrogance and selfishness and defend his tribalism; there is no benefit in his deceiving people by mixing solicitude for the Religion with solicitude for his arrogance, and mixing defence of the truth with defence of his group or his tribalism.

The person who understands that Islam should not contain devotion in the soul, slavehood in the heart, constant remembrance, and trembling supplication in the pre-dawn hours but rather wants it be (or he wishes it were) just statements, activism, and planning; he must not find the particular traits of this *islam* of his in the verses of Allah's Book, the Sunnah of His Messenger, and the ways of the Pious First Three Generations. He can only find them among the proponents of modern ideological movements. It is only from them that he can procure the moulds for the *islam* that he wants.

The person who wants Islam to be no more than isolating oneself in a masjid or *zāwiyah*, does not ask his family to do more than some *wirds* that are repeated every morning and evening, and likes to jump up and recite poems while giving his soul the delight of thinking the heart is somehow being rectified; this person must not repeat the verses in the Qur'ān about *jihad*, or remember the biography of Allah's Messenger ﷺ and how he strived so brilliantly to establish a Muslim community and the rule of Islam. Moreover, he must not remember that he ﷺ built this sublime Islamic community and then handed it over as a trust to the generations of his Ummah that came after him.

As for the person who understands Islam as his Lord ﷻ sent it down: faith in Allah alone, certainty that he is the owned slaved of this one, singular deity, firm conviction that he was created in this world in order to be His ﷻ slave with the ability to earn and choose just as He created him as a slave by force and compulsion, the firm conviction that his final destination is to Allah and that he will be recompensed for what he did, and this is then followed by persistent action to push back the soul that commands to evil and ascend the ranks of righteousness and nearness to Allah as well as to push the community that he is a part of towards living under Allah's rule; this is the person whose understanding and conduct are a seed that can grow into Islamic unity.

It is upon this axis that Muslims can come together, and it is from this starting point that Allah will give victory to the Muslims and support them.

LET US MAKE A PLEDGE BEFORE PARTING WAYS

I call on you – dear reader – and myself not to let this book be just pretty words and just for reading or studying.

I call on you to make a pledge with me before Allah ﷻ before we go our separate ways, a pledge that will be the secret of our felicity in this life, sources of light in our graves, our defender on the Day of Reckoning, and a firm footing for us as we cross the *Ṣirāṭ*.

Let us pledge to do the following:

That we wake up for Fajr every day – if we fail to wake up beforehand – and we start the day by performing the Fajr prayer with the first congregation in the nearest masjid. Then we remain focused on Allah the Exalted, remembering Him and supplicating to Him until sunrise.

That we leave whatever we are doing – wherever we are and regardless of the circumstances – when we hear the call to prayer and make our way to the nearest masjid. The toils of this world will never harm a Muslim who seeks refuge in Allah's house five times every day and night.

That we exert every effort to ensure that our precious lifetime is not spent in anything but obedience to Allah, striving legitimately to seek knowledge or provision, or permissible rest after weariness or illness.

That when night comes, and each one of us has gone to bed, each of us remembers that maybe when he lies down this time he will never get up, and that it could be the last time he sees this world. At that point, let him think over his life and the hours he might have wasted on amusements and disobedience. Then, let him seek Allah's forgiveness with a trembling, remorseful heart. Let him read the *Mu'awwidhatān*,[1] Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ, Sūrat al-Kāfirūn and all the other remembrances that have come down to us.[2] Then he should try not to let his eyes close unless he is glorifying Allah, seeking His forgiveness, and remembering Him.

When this world presents its blessings and comforts to you, or its afflictions and evils, do not forget the reality that fills this entire universe: no one gives, no one withholds, no one benefits, and no one harms except Allah ﷻ. People have no power over themselves and no power over one another. Then, attach your heart to Him alone; thanking Him for your blessings, being patient with your trials, and begging at His door.

When you have completed the prayer and finished from the supplications and remembrances that follow it, do not move from your place until you have stretched your hands towards Allah ﷻ and make a trembling supplication to Him that comes from the depths of your soul, with humility and submissiveness. Therein, ask Him to fulfil all of your needs. Ask Him to protect you from everything that you fear. Seek His forgiveness for all of your bad deeds. There is no good in a defective prayer that is not concluded with the slave's humility and fervent supplication of his Master.

1 (tn): i.e. Sūrat al-Falaq (113) and Sūrat an-Nās (114).

2 When the Prophet ﷺ went to bed, he would say, {Praise be to Allah, who has given us food and drink, sufficed us, and accommodated us. How many are those who have no one to suffice them or accommodate them.}.

If you notice that people are angry with you, exert yourself so that Allah's being pleased with you is the best consolation that will make you forget about their anger. You should also know that that is better for you than people's being pleased with you while Allah is angry with you.

When your soul urges you to backbite a Muslim brother of yours, remember that you, too, have flaws and shortcomings, and if Allah were to lift the veil from you, people would talk about you and your shortcomings in their gatherings and conversations. If you remember this, you will be too ashamed before Allah – if you have some shame – to talk about people in an unlawful manner. Instead, you will occupy yourself with thanking Allah for veiling your shortcomings from others.

Exert every effort to ensure that the capital that you present to Allah tomorrow is a pure heart that has been cleansed from the filth of hatred and malice. A few acts of obedience might suffice if one has a pure, sound heart, but many acts of obedience are of no benefit if one's heart is diseased and full of hatred.

When your soul entices you to commit something unlawful, or pulls you towards implementing any of the articles of this pledge, remember – if you are a believer in Allah – your deathbed. When disobedience is abundant, remembering death will only decrease it, and when obedience is little, remembering death will only increase it.

Ask Allah to grant your brother *tawfīq* so that he can remain firm upon this pledge, and I will do the same for you,

And Praise be to Allah, Lord of all Creation